CHRONICLERS OF LIFE

AMALENDU BOSE

ORIENT LONGMANS

Bhuwan Pati Sharma
195 Vijay Garh
Jammu

CHRONICLERS OF LIFE

STUDIES IN EARLY VICTORIAN POETRY

And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who chronicled the stages of all life.

Browning, *Pauline* (1888 text)

AMALENDU BOSE

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To

The Memory

of

David Nichol Smith

A *Guru* in the ancient Aryan sense

PREFACE

The five 'studies' here collected, each complete in itself in theme as well as in treatment, are nonetheless closely linked up by some common aims and convictions. They all aim at contributing to a firmer understanding and a richer appraisal of the direction and achievement of English poetry between the death of Byron and the death of Wordsworth, a quarter of a century during which, from an initial state of uncertainty and apparent collapse, poetry gradually regained its old magisterial rôle in society. On 19 April 1824, Alfred Tennyson, a boy of fourteen, heard of Byron's death in Missolonghi, felt as if the world had suddenly grown dark, ran out of his Somersby home and carved on a rock the words 'Byron is dead'. If a younger boy called Robert Browning did not on that occasion feel equally depressed, his youthful adoration for Byron he retained in mature life as his words to Elizabeth Barrett show:

> I would at any time have gone to Fincheley to see a curl of his [Byron's] hair or one of his gloves, I am sure—while Heaven knows that I could not get up enthusiasm enough to cross the room if at the other end of it all Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey were condensed into the little china bottle yonder.
>
> (*Browning Love Letters*, ii, 455)

Returning to England after many years, Colonel Newcome felt like a Rip Van Winkle when

> he heard opinion that amazed and bewildered him: he heard that Byron was no great poet, though a very clever man; he heard that there had been a wicked persecution against Mr Pope's memory and fame, and that it was time to reinstate him; that his

favourite Doctor Johnson talked admirably but did not write English; that young Keats was a genius to be estimated in future days with young Raphael; and that a young gentleman of Cambridge who had lately published two volumes of verses, might rank with the greatest poets of the world !....He tried in vain to construe 'Oenone', and to make sense of 'Lamia' !

(*The Newcomes*, ch. xxi)

Other contemporary novels like *Pendennis* and *Alton Locke* refer to the rising poets for a fresh generation of readers. Towards the end of this quarter century, the literary scene changed from that of 1834 when, as he recounts in his *Autobiography* (p.119), Sir Henry Taylor of *Philip Van Artevelde* fame had found a 'flatness', or from that of 1837, the year of Victoria's accession to the throne, when the arrogant Branwell Brontë had written to Wordsworth (as we learn from the first volume, p. 152, of the Shakespeare Head Brontë) that he did not find 'a writing poet worth a sixpence.' A new poetry was in the making, new not merely because a number of young poets had appeared on the scene but new fundamentally because new trends in society had ushered in fresh literary ideals and criteria. Tennyson's succession to the Laureateship in 1850 when respected poets of an elder generation like Rogers, Landor and Leigh Hunt were still living and were mentioned for the honour, marked through him an official recognition of the new poetry.

Seldom has the poetry of an age been so widely and so deeply affected by the contemporary situation as the poetry of the second quarter of the nineteenth century in England. It was an age of conflicts, contradictions, compromises, all testifying to the seething vitality of the issues around which a tremendous amount of excitement clustered. Side by side with the appalling squalor and misery in which thousands shrivelled, the prosperity of the nation was increasing visibly; while there were jeremiads foretelling chaos in the wake of

expanding democratic franchise, there were unmistakable signs that the Mother of Parliaments was more vigorous than ever before. Along with a powerful faith in progress, a faith strengthened by recent evolutionary hypotheses and still more by astonishing developments in the means of production, there grew up hopes of a Federation of Mankind and a recognition of a new status of the individual so ably expounded by E. S. Dallas:

> What strikes me most in the movement of our time is expressed by Tennyson in the saying 'the individual withers, and the world is more and more.' But I am not sure whether the essence of this thought might not be expressed in the very opposite terms: the individual prospers, and the world is less and less. The great point to be seized is that there is gradually being wrought a change in the relation of the individual to the mass...Yet if the hero as an individual is of less account than he used to be, and so may be said to wither, the individual in a much wider sense may be said to prosper. The little men and the private men and all the incidents of privacy are coming into repute...We have learned to feel that there is as much greatness in the family as in the state...Whether the individual may be said to flourish or to wither, still the change that has come over his position is an important one for art. The heart, the common heart, has ever been the stronghold of art. We know that art rejoices in a hero, and if we find the hero withering—if marvels are abolished and the gigantesque passes out of sight—so much the worse, it would appear, for art. But on the other hand, what art most prizes in the hero is the human side of his character, the little touches of nature by which he is more particularly felt to be kin to the whole world, the very points about him which are not exceptional, and which, therefore, are not heroic, but common. If individuals fail as heroes, still they flourish and are of more account than ever as men.
>
> (*The Gay Science*, vol. ii, ch. xvii, pp. 250-51, 271-72)

Here then was a situation which was felt to be (and indeed was) unique in the history of civilization, holding forth un-

explored possibilities for poetry. The details of the situation are embedded in the numerous source-materials for the social and economic history of the period, but in the essays of the present collection, I have not presumed a knowledge on the part of my reader much beyond the two volumes of *Early Victorian England* and of, especially, G. M. Young's chapter, 'Portrait of An Age'. Aware of living in an age when the pattern of civilization was changing, the Early Victorians tried their best to adjust poetry to the new conditions. A gushy journalist of the period wrote:

> It is time for a POET once more to arise...duly awakened, and befittingly inspired, how lofty is the position he may occupy !—how magnificent the objects which surround him ! The elements of the old world shaken—the mine latent beneath the thrones of kings, and the worms busy at their purple—the two antagonist principles of earth, Rest and Change, mightily at war !...A poet, rapt in the spirit of this age, will command the next ! What themes and what fame may be reserved for one whose mind can be thus slowly nurtured to great thoughts by great events; steeped in the colours of a dread, yet bright time; elevated with the august hopes that dawn upon his species; and standing on the eminence of one of those eras in the records of the world in which
>
> 'WE SEE, AS FROM A TOWER, THE END OF ALL!'
>
> (*The New Monthly Magazine*, 1833, Pt. I, p. 74)

If the Early Victorians failed to build up a poetry that was quite the nonpareil that some such contemporaries expected it to be, theirs is at least a poetry that is the beginning of a new direction rather than the end of the old. Although the poetic artefact has undergone important changes in our times and although the poet of this century, if he must seek models for his artefact, will skip over the Victorians back to some earlier period, the basic problem of the relationship between poetry and its social roots remains the same today as it was in the thirties and the forties of the last century. As one who

does not belong to western civilization but has some acquaintance with western life and letters, I have found English poetry between the death of Byron and the death of Wordsworth charged with a meaning to describe which I may be permitted to quote here some of my words that occur further down on p.212 of this book:

> This was the period when the principal implications of a mechanized and science-dominated life manifested themselves in society, and the Early Victorians were really path-finders in problems that continue to face us today and in most regions of the world. Among nations that have been somewhat recently going the way of democracy, science and technology, the material conditions today are more or less comparable to the conditions prevailing in Early Victorian England, when allowances are made for the differences signified by post-Victorian discoveries in science and technique. To the impact of machinery and democracy on the social organization, the literatures of such nations have reacted along lines more or less similar to those of Early Victorian literature. The Early Victorian pattern of socio-economic ferment has its modern counterparts — once again, making all such allowances as history demands—in many parts of the world, not in Asia alone. Today's poet of a newly-emerging nation has, more often than not, to find himself confronted with aesthetic problems of a nature broadly similar to those of the Early Victorians and therefore it may be worth his while to draw lessons from, not necessarily to imitate, his British predecessor. Indeed, not only the poet of another nation and another language, but the British poet of today as well, might find it instructive to study the poetry of the social ferment of a century ago.

Living in a grand climacteric, the Early Victorian refused to be exclusive in either the choice of his theme or its treatment. 'Not deep the poet sees, but wide,' said Matthew Arnold in 'Resignation', not altogether accurately, and echoing the words of Terence, 'Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto,' Browning described the function of

the poet in words which have furnished me with the title of this book:

> And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
> Who chronicled the stages of all life.

The essays of the present collection aim at, among other things, examining the poetry of the thirties and the forties of the last century as at once a chronicle and poetry. Two of these essays analyze single poems: Browning's *Pauline*, the first published work of a poet who had not yet come into his own, a work that stands out quite early in this period; and Tennyson's *In Memoriam* of which the prolonged making covered the whole decade of the forties and a considerable portion of the thirties, on the publication of which, it may be said, Tennyson and Victorian poetry attained majority. The methods of critical analyses adopted for these two essays are different: *Pauline* is examined mainly for its imagery and vocabulary, *In Memoriam* for its conceptual content. An essay on the Annuals gives an account of a seldom-discussed area of English poetry. The essays on the poetry of social ferment and the verse-novel examining a considerable quantity of writings which elicited some contemporary notice, should offer the reader of today a full perspective and a clear chiaroscuro of the poetry of a century and a quarter ago.

Calcutta, 1962 A. Bose

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'GROWING PAINS' —A STUDY OF BROWNING'S *PAULINE*

I

Pauline was the first published work of Robert Browning. That he was given to writing poems long before the publication of *Pauline* is evident from his letter to Richard Henry Horne, dated Florence, 3 December 1848:

> When I got older, perhaps at twelve or thirteen, I wrote a book of verses which Eliza read and wrote to me about . . . . . . then in a few months (for one grows fast at that age) I saw the proper way, and put my blessed 'poems' in the fire . . . . When, years after I began again, and printed a little thing, 'Pauline' . . . . one day Eliza told me to my amazement and discomfort, that she had 'still by her somewhere, safe' all the letters I had written to her — 'never being used to destroy a scrap of any such thing' — moreover producing on some occasion or other, a sort of album-book in which were entered 'poem' this or 'poem' the other, duly transcribed from my delectable collection aforesaid.
>
> (*Letters of Robert Browning*, ed. T. L. Hood, p. 20)

After the death of the two sisters, Miss Eliza Flower and Mrs Sarah Adams, Browning recovered these poems through Mrs Bridell-Fox, daughter of W. J. Fox, and perhaps those were the poems which Browning at one time intended for a volume to be called *Incondita*, and which T. J. Wise was horrified to see being flung into the fire by the poet in 1884.

Pauline was composed between 22 October 1832—the day on which Browning was inspired by Edmund Kean's performance in Shakespeare's *Richard III* to an ambitious poetical project—and the unknown date in January 1833 on

which he inscribed 'London, January 1833' below the prefatory quotation from Cornelius Agrippa's Latin. At this time, Browning was 20 years 6 months old, and lived with his parents in their house near Camberwell Green. The poem appeared anonymously in March 1833. The young poet's aunt, Mrs Silverthorne, gave him thirty pounds towards the expenses of the edition; £26-5-0 went on paper and printing, £3-15-0 on advertising. The book did not sell at all.[1] It 'is now one of the most valuable of modern books; a copy sold recently for 16,000 dollars. There are only 21 copies known.'[2]

A second edition, no longer anonymous, headed the collected works of Browning in 1868; the third edition came out in 1888. The title-page of the first edition runs thus:

PAULINE;/ A/ Fragment of a confession./ Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,/ Et ne le scaurois jamais être./ Marot./ London:/ Saunders and Otley, Conduit Street./ 1833./

Browning had read Clement Marot in his boyhood with his French tutor, M. Loradoux; the French poet is mentioned again in *The Glove*. The quotation means: 'I am no longer—I could never be again—what I was.' The second page of the edition is a blank; the third page contains an extract from De Occulta Philosophia of Henry Cornelius Agrippa. The most important sentence of the paragraph, 'Nam et ego vobis illa non probo, sed narro' is printed in capital letters. The paragraph has been translated thus:

I have no doubt that the title of our book may by its unusual character entice very many to read it, and that among them some of biased opinions, with weak minds—many even hostile and churlish—will attack our genius, who in the rashness of their ignorance will cry out, almost before they have read the title, that we are teaching forbidden things, are scattering the seeds of heresies, that we are an annoyance to righteous ears, to enlightened minds an object of offense . . . To these I now give counsel not to read our book, neither to understand it nor remember it; for it is harmful,

poisonous; the gate of Hell is in this book ... On the other hand, if you find things which do not please, pass over them and make no use of them. FOR I DO NOT RECOMMEND THESE THINGS TO YOU: I MERELY TELL YOU OF THEM. Yet do not on that account reject the rest. Therefore if anything has been said rather freely, forgive my youth; I wrote this work when I was less than a youth.

(By F. A. Pottle; see De Vane, *Handbook*, 2nd. ed., pp. 41-42)

On this prefatory note, the poet's comment in the 1888 edition is: 'This introduction would appear less absurdly pretentious did it apply, as was intended, to a completed structure of which the poem was meant for only a beginning and remains a fragment.' On the left corner at the bottom of the first page occur the words,

London, January 1833.
V. A. XX.

V. A. XX has been explained by Browning as 'the Latin abbreviation of *Vixi Annos*—"I was twenty years old"—that is, the imaginary subject of the poem was of that age.'[3] The fourth page is a blank, but in the copy which is at the Dyce and Forster Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Kensington, the following holograph occurs on this page:

The following Poem was written in pursuance of a foolish plan which occupied me mightily for a time, and which had for its object the enabling me to assume and realize I know not how many different characters ;— meanwhile the world was never to guess that 'Brown, Smith, Jones and Robinson' (as the spelling books have it) the respective authors of this poem, the other novel, such an opera, such a speech &c. &c. were no other than one and the same individual. The present abortion was the first work of the *Poet* of the batch, who could have been more legitimately myself than most of the others; but I surrounded him with all manner of (to my then notion) poetical accessories, and had planned quite a delightful life for him.

Only this crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in this Fool's Paradise of mine.

'R. B.'

This self-criticism, written probably not long after the publication of *Pauline*, testifies to the young poet's astonishing capacity for detachment from his work, the *primum opus* at that, and marks, moreover, the poet's progress beyond his earliest poetical conception.

At the end, the poem is dated Richmond, 22 October 1832, indicating not the date of composition but the date of conception of the poem. On that day, Browning had visited Richmond to see Kean's performance in *Richard III*. The occasion roused him to so deep a sense of drama that the idea of presenting several characters in different rôles came to him and he quickly began to work out the first instalment of the idea in *Pauline*.

Kean was acting there: I saw him in Richard III that night, and conceived the childish scheme already mentioned. There is an allusion to Kean, p. 47. I don't know whether I had not made up my mind to *act*, as well as to make verse, music, and God knows what—que de chateaux en Espagne!

(*Letters*, ed. Hood, p. 366 n.)

Lines 669-675 of the poem refer to Kean:

I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,
Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
And in the wane of life, yet only so
As to call up their fears, and there shall come
A time requiring youth's best energies;
And strait I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
And I rise triumphing over my decay.

Although the book failed commercially, it drew the attention of two important men of letters of the day, W. J. Fox and John Stuart Mill. Fox was a friend of the Flowers.

Browning met him one day at their house and thenceforward the veteran critic became a sort of guardian-angel to the budding poet. The enthusiastic review which Fox published in his *Monthly Repository* (April 1833) gladdened the heart of the young poet who wrote to Miss Haworth[4] of his 'inexpressible delight'. To Fox he wrote[5]: 'I can only say that I am very proud to feel as grateful as I do...I shall never write a line without thinking of the source of my first praise.' In the *Athenaeum*, 6 April 1833, Allan Cunningham noticed the poem favourably: 'We open the book at random; but fine things abound; there is no difficulty in finding passages to vindicate our praise...To one who sings so naturally, poetry must be as easy as music is to a bird.' There were two more contemporary notices, one of four unfavourable lines in the *Literary Gazette* of 23 March, and another in the *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* of August, describing the poem as 'a piece of pure bewilderment'. It is noticeable that some of the views on Browning's poetry that became commonplaces of later criticism, viz. Browning's obscurity, his flair for psychological analysis, and the influence of Shelley, appear already in these early reviews.

John Stuart Mill received one of a set of twelve copies of *Pauline* from Fox to whom the poet himself had sent the books. He read the poem four times through and prepared a notice for publication in one of the several journals to which he usually contributed. But the *Examiner* refused to insert the notice; *Tait's* was too overwhelmed with verses to afford more space than a flippant line by another reviewer. Till the end, Mill's criticism,[6] by far the most important statement on the poem, remained unpublished, even uncoordinated into a complete article. To F. J. Furnivall, Browning wrote in 1881:

> The pencil notes of John Mill which he meant to construct an article upon—till he found he had been forestalled by a flippant line in the Review (*Tait's Magazine*) which he was accustomed

at the time to write for—are at the end of the copy of *Pauline* in Forster's Library at Kensington.

(*Letters*, ed. Hood, p. 195)

The general trend of Mill's criticism is indicated by the following sentences:

With considerable poetic power, this writer seems to me possessed with a more intense and morbid self-consciousness than I ever knew in any sane human being......A cento of most beautiful passages might be made from this poem—and the psychological history of himself is powerful and truthful, truth-like certainly all but the last stage.

Years after the publication of *Pauline*, when the public had forgotten the poem and the poet had allowed the dust of anonymity to settle upon it, he one day received a letter from Dante Gabriel Rossetti whom he did not know at the time. Rossetti had come upon the book in the British Museum, read it through, copied the whole of it and guessing it to be Browning's work, written to the poet for confirmation. Regarding this letter of Rossetti,[7] Browning wrote to William Sharp from France in 1883:

Rossetti's *Pauline* letter was addressed to me at Florence more than thirty years ago. I have preserved it, but even were I at home, should be unable to find it without troublesome searching. It was to the effect that the writer, personally and altogether unknown to me, had come upon a poem in the British Museum, which he copied the whole of, from its being not otherwise procurable—that he judged it to be mine, but could not be sure, and wished me to pronounce on the matter—which I did.

Two years after this correspondence, some time between June and October 1852, when the Brownings had returned to London for a while, they were visited at their 58, Welbeck Street home by 'Mr. Allingham and a friend—who proved

to be Rossetti.'[8] Relations between the two poets grew friendly as the letters of Browning to Rossetti dated 29 October 1855 and 9 April 1871 show; but after the publication of *Fifine At The Fair* in which Browning was alleged to have cast aspersions on Rossetti's treatment in *Jenny* of the public-woman theme, the relations were broken off.

Seldom has any author's distaste for his first work been so severe as Browning's for *Pauline*. The last sentence in his autograph note appended to the Forster copy of *Pauline* speaks eloquently of his early disillusion: 'Only this crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in this Fool's Paradise of mine.' The distaste was so keen that even to Miss Barrett he was unwilling to show the work. The first mention of the poem by name in the *Browning Love Letters* is in Elizabeth's letter dated 10 January 1846, exactly a year after Robert had written his first letter to her. Before this date, on 26 February 1845, Browning had, *en passant*, referred to the poem: 'Is there not somewhere the little book I first printed when a boy?' In her reply, Miss Barrett enquires: 'And was the little book written with Mr. Mill, pure metaphysics, or what?' The query remains unanswered, and there is no mention of *Pauline* until Elizabeth's letter referred to above: 'Then I *shall have "Pauline" in a day or two*—yes, I shall and must, and *will*.' Presumably, they had had a talk about the book, but Browning was unwilling to show it to her. The correspondence goes thus:

(R. B. to E. B. B., 12 Jan. 1846) Must you see 'Pauline'? At least then let me wait a few days; to correct the misprints which affect the sense, and to write you the history of it; what is necessary you should know before you see it.

(E. B. B. to R. B., 14 Jan. '46) For 'Pauline'—when I had named it to you I was on the point of sending for the book to the booksellers—then suddenly I thought to myself that I should wait and hear whether you very very much would dislike my reading it...... And now, because I may, I *must* read it.

(R. B. to E. B. B., 15 Jan. '46) Will you, and must you have 'Pauline'? If I could pray you to revoke that decision! For it is altogether foolish and *not* boylike—and I shall, I confess, hate the notion of running over it—yet commented it must be; more than mere correction! I was unluckily *precocious*—but I had rather you *saw* real infantine efforts (verses at six years old, and drawings still earlier) than this ambiguous, feverish—Why not wait?

(E. B. B. to R. B., 17 Jan. '46) Only, 'Pauline', I must have *some day*—why not without the emendations? But if you insist on them, I will agree to wait a little—if you promise *at last* to let me see the book, which I will not show.

(R.B. to E.B.B., 19 Jan. '46) 'Pauline' is altogether of a different sort of precocity—you shall see it when I can master resolution to transcribe the explanation which I know is on the fly-leaf of a copy here.

(E. B. B. to R. B., 22 Jan. '46) And for 'Pauline'.....I am satisfied with the promise to see it some day.................I seem to understand that you would really rather wish me not to see it now.

(*Browning Love Letters*, I, pp. 393-423)

When three and a half decades after the first publication, *Pauline* was permitted by the poet to appear in a second edition in 1868, the poet's rooted aversion was unconcealed in the introductory note:

The first piece in the series, I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed purely of necessity; for not long ago, I inspected one, and am certified of the existence of other transcripts, intended sooner or later to be published abroad: by forestalling these, I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed) and introduce a boyish work by an exculpatory word. The thing was my earliest attempt at 'poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine' which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant and a scale less impracticable than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch—a sketch that, on reviewal,

appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced: good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time.

The same tone—at once denigrating and apologetic—is audible in the introductory note to the 1888 edition.

Twenty years' endurance of an eyesore seems more than sufficient: my faults remain, duly recorded against me, and I claim permission to somewhat diminish these, so far as style is concerned, in the present and final edition where 'Pauline' must needs, first of my performances, confront the reader. I have simply removed solecisms, mended the metre a little, and endeavoured to strengthen the phraseology—experience helping, in some degree, the helplessness of juvenile haste and heat in their untried adventure long ago.

A type facsimile reprint of the first edition, limited to four hundred copies, was produced by T. J. Wise in 1886 for the members of the Browning Society. The Oxford edition of Standard Authors brings the 1833-text within easy reach of the reading public; the 1940 edition, however, gives the 1888-text. N. Hardy Wallis in 1931 brought out an edition of the early text compared with the variant readings of the editions of 1868 and 1888.

II

A comparative study of the three editions of *Pauline* does not yield that knowledge of poetic evolution as may be obtained from a similar study of Keats's or Rossetti's poems or of the early works of Tennyson. In the preface to the 1868 edition, Browning writes, 'I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed)', and in spite of the hyperbole of the parenthetic assertion, the statement is substantially correct. Nor does the final edition of 1888 elevate the poem to any appreciably higher level of craftsmanship. This non-evolutionary character of the later editions arises, inevitably from the length of the interval between the first and the second editions which was too wide to enable the poet to recapture the youthful mood, a mood, besides, the type of which he had long since abjured within less than a decade of *Pauline*. Furthermore, Browning never was a verbal artist of the tribe of Keats and Rossetti. He is not a lover of words for their own sake; no lure of words leads him to a radical recasting of lines and stanzas. In fact, with the solitary exception of *Sordello*, no important work of Browning underwent that recasting which Tennyson, for instance, brought to bear upon his 1832 poems. In Browning's poems and letters, we have numerous discussions on the subject-matter of poetry and its treatment, but few on the diction. In respect of his attitude to the medium of poetry, Browning is comparable to Byron who treated words as pliable moulds for a gusto of passion, to be put to use for an immediate need and then set aside. That he could never have patience with poetry which is a reverie of words is borne out by the following extracts from two letters to Isabella Blagden:

As to Swinburne's verses, I agree with you—they are 'florid impotence', to my taste—the *minimum* of thought and idea in the *maximum* of words and phraseology. Nothing said and done with, left to stand alone and trust for its effect in its own worth. What a way of writing is that wherein, wanting to say that 'a man is sad', you express it as, 'he looketh like to one, as one might say, who hath a sadness and is sad indeed, so that beholders think 'How sad is he!'

(*Letters*, ed. Hood, p. 136)

Yes,—I have read Rossetti's poems—and poetical they are,—*scented* with poetry, as it were—like trifles of various sorts you take out of a cedar or sandal-wood box: you know I hate the effeminacy of his school,—the men that dress up like women,—that use obsolete forms, too, and archaic accentuations to seem soft—fancy a man calling it a lil*y*,—lil*ies* and so on.

(*Letters*, ed. Hood, p. 137)

This undervaluing of the fragrance of words is as much a feature of his early poetry as of the later. Doubtless, the general character of the diction of *Pauline* is considerably different from that of the later poems, the dramatic lyrics and the dramatic romances. The primary reason for this difference is that the style of *Pauline* (as also that of *Paracelsus*) springs from a sweep of sentiment and imaginative fervour while the art of the monologues is the outcome of an intellectual approach to the motive-forces behind the actions of men and women. The diction of the monologues is distinguished by a realistic accuracy while much of the diction of *Pauline* sprawls under diffuse feelings. Nevertheless, the poet's attitude to the medium of poetry is the same in *Pauline* as elsewhere. Not an ecstasy of words but an impelling necessity of giving immediate utterance to his thoughts drives Browning to an unlingering employment of words.

Although the textual changes in the later editions of *Pauline* do not help us to any material extent to understand the

development of the poet's mind and art, there are none the less a number of changes that anticipate his later processes of thinking. The poem composed in course of four months and hurriedly, written 'on one leg',—'a free and easy sort of thing',[9]—bears signs of hastiness, incontinent speed, and an inability to collect the thoughts together into a coherent, integrated structure. Such a sign is provided by the extravagant use of the dash,—302 times in the A-text (1833 edn.) being reduced to 74 times in the C-text (1888 edn.). The main improvement effected in the second edition (B-text, 1868) is in the direction of a more relevant and precise punctuation, the simple comma in many instances replacing the colon or semi-colon or the ubiquitous dash; a more judicious use of the full-stop to mark off one continuous logical statement from another. Some amount of the alleged obscurity of the first edition arises from a telescoping of views and contrary views, feebly separated by the dash, into one run-on paragraph. Consider the following lines (698-706, A-text) :

Pauline, I could do anything—not now—
All's fever—but when calm shall come again—
I am prepared—I have made life my own—
I would not be content with all the change
One frame should feel—but I have gone in thought
Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all life
When it is most alive—where strangest fate
New shapes it past surmise—the tales of men
Bit by some curse—or in the grasps of doom

The paragraph is meant to convey a crescendo of emotion climbing along ten dash signs in nine lines, and there is an emotional swell audible in the last four lines, but in the earlier part, the paragraph tosses the reader from one idea to another. 'I could do anything'—the *anything* lacks just that precision which alone could make the assertion convincing. If the telegraphic omission of redundancies were supplied,

the sentence would run thus: 'I could do anything *but* not now, *because now* all is fever, but *only* when calm shall come again; *and for that eventuality* I am prepared *so thoroughly that* I have made my life mine own *and* I would not be content with all the changes *which* one frame should feel.' *Pauline* thus foreshadows that rejection of redundant parts of speech which became a prevailing element of Browning's mature style. On Mrs Orr's authority[10] we learn the story that a presumptuous letter from Miss Caroline Fox and John Sterling's dissatisfaction with the 'verbosity' of *Paracelsus* led Browning to an experiment in *Sordello* on dictional economy through compressed syntax. But this stylistic compression is not altogether a later growth; in *Pauline*, there is actually no verbal condensation but a tendency towards it indicated by the prodigal use of the dash and by his habit of leaving a clause or a sentence suddenly unfinished.

The frequent use of the dash in Browning's poetry, especially the early poetry, is an index to the intense agility of his mind. The restless energy of his thought-process lends a certain jerky movement to his expression, and, unable to maintain an even, continuous flow, it is split up into clauses and parenthetic statements. Such a quality thrives particularly when the form of the poem demands a familiar style. In his letters as also in *Pauline*, a poem which is, as it were, an epistolary monologue, the informal, intimate nature of the utterance gives free scope to the poet's native tendency towards energetic expression, and consequently, the dash abounds. The structural affinity between the following passage from a letter and the *Pauline* passage quoted above, is beyond question:

Nor am I so selfish, I hope, as that (because my uttermost pride and privilege and glory above all glories would be to live in your sick-room and serve you,)—as that, on that account, I would not rather see you in a condition to need none of my service...the next

thing to serving you, is to be what shall I say?—served by you... loved by you, made happy by you—it is the being an angel, though there might be *arch*angels—

And if *now* you do not understand,—well, I kneel to you, my Ba, and pray you to give yourself to me in deed as in word, the body as the heart and mind—and *now*!—at any time,—you know what I cannot say, I cannot, I think,—if I know myself—love you more than I do...but I shall always love you *thus*—and *thus*, in any case, happen what God may ordain—

(*Browning Love Letters*, II, pp. 208-9)

The dash can sometimes be a helpful instrument to the poet, as in the following extracts, adding to the momentum of the passion, the volume of the joy, the cinematographic vividness of the picture:

thou art my breath—my life—a last
Resource—an extreme want: (907-8)

Air, air—fresh life-blood,—thin and searching air—
The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us: (788-89)

Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set
On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plain, (798-99)

In all these instances, the removal of the dash in the C-text leads to a weakening of the original imaginative impression. The corresponding C-texts go thus:

thou art my breath, my life, a last
Resource, an extreme want:

Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,
The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us,

Down the hill! Stop—a clump of trees, see, set
On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plain:

What was an accelerated fervour in the A-text has been reduced to a mere catalogue in the C-text. Broadly speaking,

when Browning presents things about which his conception is clear and deep,—be they metaphysical ideas or lyrical and sensuous passions—he has little need to borrow the mechanical assistance of a punctuation mark like the dash.

268-276: I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self—distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers;
And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,
But linked in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create, and rule, and call
Upon all things to minister to it;

791-795: Water is beautiful, but not like air.
See, where the solid azure waters lie,
Made as of thickened air, and down below,
The fern-ranks, like a forest spread themselves,
As tho' each pore could feel the element;

While the B-text deals with the punctuation, the C-text attends to diction and metre.[11] The phraseological changes of the final edition may thus be classified and illustrated:

(i) improving the grammar:—

811: O God where does this (*do they*—C) tend—these struggling aims:

(ii) reducing the subjective tone:—

525: As would encircle me (*men*—C) with praise and love;

(iii) moderating a statement:—

867: That speech is (*seemed*—C) mockery;

(iv) heightening a statement:—

626: All hopes and fears, to live alone with it, (A)
All happy ignorant hopes and fears, to live, (C)

(v) lending precision and clarity to the expression:—

508: Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain—(A)
Some trusted end, grows sad when all proves vain—(C)

(vi) alteration of the idea:—

687-88: Why have not I sought refuge in myself,
But for the woes I saw and could not stay—(A)
Why else have I sought refuge in myself,
But from the woes I saw and could not stay? (C)

Perhaps the most interesting verbal change occurs in line 884 where 'chronicled' replaces 'shadowed out'. The two texts are:—

(A) And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who shadowed out the stages of all life,
And so thou badest me tell this my first stage—

(C) And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who chronicled the stages of all life,
And so thou bad'st me shadow this first stage.

DeVane (*Handbook*, p. 38) comments thus on the change: 'The difference implied in the single word is great: the earlier version reveals the autobiographical and confessional poet of 1833; the later shows the "dramatic" poet which he strove to become.' It is necessary to be more cautious in interpreting this verbal modification. A favourite word with Browning, 'chronicled' no doubt implies the objective character of poetry. But 'shadowed out' of 1833, retained in 1868, has the sense of 'setting forth', and bears virtually the same meaning as 'chronicled', although it may not imply the same thoroughness of artistic objectivity. 'Shadowed out' connotes no autobiographical tendency; it rather throws a faint suggestion of the *dramatis personae* being marionettes in the hands of the poet. Disliking the effete verb 'tell' in line 886, Browning cancelled

it and also 'my', and put in 'shadow', a verb of two syllables; next, to avoid repetition, he replaced 'shadowed out' of line 884 by the trisyllabic word 'chronicled'. The fact that in 1888, Browning did not discard the verb 'shadowed out' (the disappearance of which from line 884 is considered so important by DeVane) but used this verb and 'chronicled' as though they are interchangeable, proves that both texts imply the same conception of the function of the poet. The word 'chronicled' is used in the same sense of objective and all-inclusive realism in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man:* 'He chronicled with patience what he saw, detaching himself from it.' Indeed there is a close parallel between Stephen Dedalus's adolescent mind and the mental processes of Pauline's lover: 'He [Dedalus] was angry with himself for being young and the prey of restless foolish impulses.' Here in *Pauline*, Browning touches upon the problem of the function of poetry (and hence of the poet) with which he is afterwards preoccupied in *Paracelsus*, in *Sordello*, 'How it strikes a contemporary', *The Two Poets of Croisic*, some of the *Parleyings*, and incidentally in many other works including *The Ring and the Book* and *Fifine At The Fair*.

III

In his earliest published work,' Browning rejects the traditional forms of poetry and boldly experiments in the novel form of the monologue but notwithstanding its novelty, the form is also the gravest defect of the poem. Except the French note by Pauline, and the date appended to the poem, there is no evidence, internal or otherwise, to show that it is a written statement. It might as well be a speech. The value of the statement, as a *confession*, would not be affected by its form, whether a speech or a manuscript, yet some difference in the technique would arise. A written statement like *A Death in the Desert* or an epistolary monologue like *Cleon* or *Karshish* has a technique different from that of a speech monologue proper like *Fra Lippo Lippi*. The speech monologue has a way of plunging straight into the theme which the written statement has not. Being a written thing, it is more formal, and requires a prelusive exposition of the situation. If the main theme of *Cleon* be considered a cultured Greek contemporary's view of Christ, and the main theme of *Karshish* a scientifically-minded Semitic's reaction to the story of Christ, then surely these two poems contain much matter that is not strictly germane to the issues. Yet these other items are not superfluities; they create that verisimilitude which is so necessary for a credible presentation of the themes. A speech monologue, on the contrary, begins with a quick hint of the action that forms the immediate cause of the speech. 'But do not let us quarrel any more, no my Lucrezia',—thus the speaker opens his statement and we instantly realize the importance of the quarrel as the immediate impetus to Andrea's long self-analysis. The first two lines of *The Bishop Orders His Tomb* make clear the

impending death of the speaker and prepare us for a testamentary speech. The first paragraph of *Bishop Blougram* sets the properties, as it were, for the harangue that follows. Thus, while the speech monologue is forthright, the written statement is dilatory. But *Pauline* shows neither of these qualities. Here, one reads line after line without meeting any description or a dependable hint of a background of actual events. There is no fable in the poem,—that is its chief weakness. In fact, our native curiosity for a fable is roused several times and each time thoughtlessly let down by the poet. In lines 25-27, the poet-lover states that there must be a sad confession first, to be followed by remorse and pardon and renewal of old affiliations. A new paragraph begins at line 28, 'I had been spared this shame, if I had sate' etc., and one expects this to begin the explanation of the occasion of the hero's self-disparagement, but the expectation is baffled when from the next line onwards, the poet-lover trails off into another long wail for his degenerated state. Line 55 promises a reminiscent narration, 'Thou wilt remember one warm morn', but one searches the succeeding lines in vain for a grain of solid fact. Before one can enter into a spiritual understanding of the speaker's feelings and thoughts, one must be intellectually satisfied about the sequence of events that has led to this mighty pother of a confession. In a sense, every dramatic monologue is a confession, intentional or not; the reader, in any case, can see into the speaker's character. But the confession must have a situational basis, some factual source of the psychology,—a source which is denied to the reader of *Pauline*. That the speaker is an Englishman, a poet, the lover of a French girl, and a Christian who has had a temporary aberration of religious doubts,—are the only solid facts of the poem. For the rest, we have a great agitation of the soul, but the circumstantial causes of this agitation are not mentioned. The poet-lover speaks of illness, madness and impending death, but these

must be moral and not physical, since Pauline in her note does not refer to any such possible calamity.

The fact is, *Pauline* lacks interior form. There is no inner necessity in the conception to control the form as there is in *Andrea del Sarto*. In *Andrea*, a conflict between character and environment inevitably calls for a dramatic utterance; the long-felt greyness of Andrea's mind contributes no less to the utterance than the immediate circumstance of Lucrezia's outing. Macbeth's speech 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' results from the impact of the news of Lady Macbeth's death upon a soul wrenched by the anguish of growing disillusion. The harmonious adaptation of the mood to the occasion is the inner compulsion out of which these utterances well up. *Pauline*, having only a mood and no discernible impetus of a background-action, is deficient in this harmony, and therefore in interior form. Nevertheless, as Browning's earliest attempt at the presentation of psychology, *Pauline* shares the artistic worth of all dramatic monologues, namely, character-revelation. In the dramatic monologue, the character is scooped up, as it were, from the stream of consciousness, and analyzed at a moment of intense spiritual existence. Undoubtedly, *Pauline* gives us such a moment of intense existence analyzed, and this inner dynamic, this quick flow of thoughts and emotions while Time watches motionless, was a novel and immensely promising element in English poetry when *Pauline* was published. In his preface (afterwards discarded) to the first edition of *Paracelsus*, Browning wrote that his attempt was

> to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim it is to set forth any phenomenon of the mind or the passions, by the operation of persons and events; and. . . . instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered

the agency by which it is influenced and determined to be generally discernible in its effects alone.

Browning's is one of the earliest and most notable of pleas for that inward slant of the creative vision which is the distinctive mark of modern literature. By his insistence on the psychological method of literature where the cause of a mood or a passion is deduced from the effect, the external machinery of events is reduced to its barest minimum, and all the artistic endeavour of the writer is devoted to a microscopic analysis of the mood in procession, Browning proves himself to be the pioneer of a long line of modern writers, such as Henry James, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley. That Browning does not succeed in his method in his first work is because the facts which he has introduced in this poem do not give the pageantry of passions and moods a sufficient *terra firma*. Unrelated to any assured background action, the moods and passions become purely lyrical and fail to be dramatic. The analytical aptitude displayed in *Pauline* in rudiments, moves from strength to strength in the later works. *Paracelsus*, written within a year and a half of *Pauline*, is virtually a string of monologues in which stress has been laid on just the amount of factual matter which is necessary to render the hero's introspection plausible. It was not before 1845 (*Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*) that Browning began systematically to have recourse to the dramatic monologue. The best pieces in this volume, best as dramatic monologues, are *The Bishop Orders*, *The Laboratory*, and *The Confessional*,—poems in which a sufficient hint of background action occurs. *Johannes Agricola* and *Porphyria's Lover* (both published first in *The Monthly Repository*, N. S., 1836) show that though Browning can conceive a situation, he cannot yet integrate the character to the action so intimately as to make the total effect plausible. The poems are in effect lyrical.

In *Pauline*, the lyrical element is stronger still. The lack of harmony between the mood and the occasion, a lack due to a total negligence of the significant features of the occasion, leaves the mood to make shift for itself as best it may. The two shorter poems are better works of art because of their greater concentration, but the parallel movements in *Pauline* of a strong emotionalism and an equally urgent desire to analyze and survey the entire field of the poet-lover's inner life, render any concentration impossible. The lyrical surplusage of the early monologues is reduced and a harmonious balance between thought and feeling is struck in the *Men and Women* volume. The interest of the form of *Pauline* lies in the fact that it marks the tentative first stage in Browning's poetry of a progressive movement towards the perfection of the dramatic monologue.

IV

Browning's vocabulary, not systematically studied so far[12], promises to be a fruitful subject of investigation inasmuch as he, more than any other major serious writer of the period, employs contemporary speech idiom. *Pauline* shows no recourse to unusual and rare words as are to be found in *Paracelsus* and *Sordello:*—genethliac, colibri, purfle, tetter, morphew, furfair, sempiternal, obsidian. Nor is there any coinage like 'beseemingness', any Gallicism like 'at last' (*Par.*, IV, 574) which is used in the sense of *enfin*, any Elizabethanism like 'I have no julep, as men think, To cheat the grave' (*Par.*, IV, 673-4).

The words which have been used most often are:—

> soul-26 times in A-text, 31 times in C (*Paracelsus*, 36 times); wild-20 (*Par.*, 7); dream-18 (*Par.*, 20); strange-16 (*Par.*, 20); dim-12 (*Par.*, 12); wander-11 (*Par.*, 3); bright-10 (*Par.*, 8); dark-9 (*Par.*, 11); beauty-7; fancy-7 (*Par.*, 8); chain-6.

Other favourite words, less often used, occurring also in *Paracelsus*, are, *gleam*, *wondrous*, *decay*, *radiant*, *woods*, *towers*, *spirit*, *giant*, *struggle*. Some of these, like *struggle*, *decay*, *chain*, *wild*, *soul*, are no doubt necessitated by the subject-matter of the poem, yet the very liberal employment of *soul* is suggestive. For his choice of the diction in *Pauline*, we cannot hold Browning indebted to any particular poet, since the favourite words, full of characteristically romantic associations, are among the stock diction of the Romantic Revival.[13] The words employed are not *distingué* but straightforward, except on occasions where an intellectual inability to cope with the

subtle variations of an effervescent mind leads to incoherence or nebulosity of expression.

Although in general, Browning's syntax carries more the quality of prose than that of conventional versification, in *Pauline* as in the later works, he shows a predilection for certain *poetic* words, words that pass current in poetry but are not permissible in prose. Among such words are substantives like 'morn' (116), 'eve' (569), 'orb' (91), 'thou' (76), 'thee' (47), 'aught' (337), 'nought' (326); verb-formations like 'dost' (959), 'hast' (950), 'wert' (561), 'wilt' (55); adjectives and adverbs like 'fain' (81), 'ere' (987), 'oft' (849), 'nigh' (494), 'far' in the sense of far-away (450); a conjunction like 'betwixt' (496); a pronoun like 'whose' (11); adjectives like 'lone' (532), 'beauteous' (535), 'wondrous' (669).

Adjectives—easy snares for a young poet—are sparingly employed by Browning, and where they are used they are mostly employed for the ordinary purpose of amplifying the sense of the noun.

2 thy *sweet* eyes,
And *loosened* hair, and *breathing* lips,
133 the *waving* mass
Of *climbing* plants, *heavy* with bloom
350 The wanderings of *delirious* dreams
749 this our *new* retreat
Walled in with a *sloped* mound of *matted* shrubs
452 *delicious* mirth,
And *laughing* fairy creatures

In these and in many other instances,—one might say almost generally throughout the poem,—the poet shows little sensitiveness to that suggestive power of qualifying words which transcends their semantic worth. The value of adjectives Browning learnt later, adjectives that are a joy for ever: 'cool silver shock of the plunge in a pool's living water', 'serpentining beauty', 'everlasting wash of air', 'fitful sunshine-

minutes', 'good, gigantic smile of the brown old earth', 'silent silver lights'. *Pauline*, however, is not altogether lacking in suggestive adjectives.

177-8 Some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the *trackless* air,
284-6 an imagination . . . . coming not
In *fitful* visions
570 The *giant* shades of fate
712-3 A slight flower growing alone, and offering
Its *frail* cup of three leaves to the *cold* sun,
733 Between the *sullen* river and the woods
788 Air, air—fresh life-blood,—*thin* and *searching* air—

The emotional tone of these adjectives intensifies the imaginative appeal of the lines. In such instances as,

362-3 a clime, where glittering mountain-tops
And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,
774-5 thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling;

the poet has chosen epithets primarily for their sound-value. In the first example, the *l* of 'clime' recurs in 'glittering', *gl* of 'glittering' recurs in 'glancing', the *t* and *n* sounds of 'glittering' are reinforced in 'mountain-tops; the *c* sound of 'glancing' is repeated in 'sea'. In the second, the consonant *p* is repeated in 'creeping' and 'plants', while 'steeped' and 'sparkling' are alliterative.

In other instances, the symbolic associations of certain words are exploited to heighten their obvious logical meaning.

102 came/A white swan to remain with me;

White implies more than the complexion of the swan, it suggests a total purity. A more conventional employment of symbolic adjectives is found in 'the *green* woods in the gay summer time' (line 369— where the use of *gay* is a tautology

because of *green*); 'which have made painters *pale*' (371—*pale* has been similarly used in 922, 'pale poet's sleep'). In 'they leave life's path for the *twilight* world' (373), the adjective is symbolical though not fresh. Browning's later judgment was not always in the right. The change of 'her dark eyes' (659) into 'her fixed eyes' is a change for the worse in view of the other adjectives already there, 'earnest and still', while *dark* of the earlier version is valuable for its suggestion of the colour of Andromeda's eyes. Similarly, there is no gain in the change of 'golden spray' (745) into 'silver spray'. Some of the adjectives, none too arresting, bear a tactual suggestion: 'the *solid* azure waters' (792), 'the *roughest* swell/of the wind' (738), 'the *thick* darkness' (107). *Soft* is repeatedly used to convey a tactual sensation: 'thy soft breasts' (740), 'soft hair' (196), 'soft mouth' (234), 'soft eyes' (765). Consider some recurring words:

wild	14	some wild thought
	30	my wild dreams of beauty and of good
	315	turning my wild youth
	138	my rude songs or my wild imaginings
strange	98	A strange delight in causing my decay
	191	And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,
	248	with strange feelings, unrevealed
	595	It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires,
bright	60	Like the bright side of a sorrow
	78	But as one entering bright halls
	161	The air seems bright with thy past presence
	423	What then seemed my bright fate
dim	91	wild dominion into the dim orb, /Of self
	915	And there was a dim crowd Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.
	522	the few dim gleams transferred
	164	With all thy dim creations gathered round

These are beautiful words capable of infinite nuances, but Browning fails to exploit the treasure. *Strange*, for instance, is

applied to anything about the quality of which the poet is either emotionally or intellectually not confident. The use of *dim* is no less indiscriminate, and *wild* is rather wildly used.

Compound words are rarer in *Pauline* than in *Sordello* or *Paracelsus*, and those that are to be found show no such study of previous poets as may be observed in Tennyson's compounds in the 1830 and the 1832 volumes. More than twenty compound epithets have been used in course of 176 lines of the first four pieces of Tennyson's 1830 *Poems*, while in the whole of *Pauline*, we find not more than a score of compound words—not all of which are epithets.

Sun-treader 151; new-shapes 705; morn-blush 583; halo-girt 320; heart-wreck 447; fruit-flushed 455; mind-broken 498; giant-ghosts 736; hell-dress 831; far-flashing sun 364; still-decaying frame 654; salt-sweeping breeze 660; snow-swathed mountains 953; pale-throated snake 762; high-crested chief 324; quick-glancing serpent 796; sea-beaten ship 919; sun-warm water 725.

Of these, 'morn-blush,' 'heart-wreck,' mind-broken' and 'hell-dress' have little imaginative value. 'New-shapes' (hyphenated into a compound in the final edition) is a bold verb-formation; 'giant-ghosts' testifies to the young poet's Shelleyan feeling for the supernatural; 'sun-treader', a marvel of a compound, attests to the poet's devotion to the hero of his youth. Some are alliterative double phrases, alliteration always having an attraction for Browning. 'Still-decaying', 'sea-beaten', 'far-flashing' and 'high-crested' are merely descriptive, but 'pale-throated' and 'quick-glancing' are vividly pictorial. 'Salt-sweeping' and 'sun-warm', particularly the latter, appeal effectively to the sense of the touch.

We have already noted Browning's impatience with qualifying parts of speech, adjectives as well as adverbs. With the solitary exception of 'quell regally' (290), the adverbs in the poem are tame and entirely functional as, 'cast joyously' (466), 'stands out hideously' (647), 'leaping airily' (721), 'winds

noiselessly' (778). The adverb is sometimes substituted by a minor simile: 'loose as a stag' (433), 'it wears me like a flame' (602), (old delights) 'had come like birds again' (565), 'should move men like a swift wind' (534). Unoriginal and belonging to the repertory of ordinary poetic diction, such similes attract Browning specially because they imply, what the static imagery of Keats do not, a state of motion. This attraction for physical mobility is equally evident in Browning's use of verbs. A verb no doubt is a part of speech denoting action, but action may be as much physical as psychological. In *Pauline*, Browning shows a predilection for verbs denoting physical action. Of the 144 different verbs (without counting the verbs 'to be' and 'to have' and their numerous inflexions) used in the first hundred and the last hundred lines of the poem taken together, as many as 109 (75 p.c. of the total) imply a physical kinesis. This fancy for actions manifesting a state of muscular energy is closely related to the poet's preference for tactual adjectives and tactual imagery. As a rule, the Browningian image is more tactual than visual (which is the most common form that sensuousness takes) or auditory. Browning does not merely see or smell a thing or hear a sound; he has, as it were, an epidermal sensation of the thing. The thing strikes his imagination as something palpable and tangible. Tactual imagery[14] grow prominent in Browning's mature poetry, but even in this his earliest work, they are more numerous and no less impressive than the imagery of other categories. The fine paean of air in *Pauline* (788-797), 'Air,—air—fresh life-blood,—thin and searching air' does not stand alone as indubitable testimony to the poet's keen power of imaginative touch.

1-2 thy *soft* breast/Shall *pant* to mine
11-12 whoso *sucks* poisoned wound
Envenoms his own veins,
18-19 whose quivering lip
Was *bathed* in her enchantments—whose brow *burned*

71-2 the *cool* breast
I leaned on altered not its *quiet beating*;

144-5 whose renown *springs up*
Like sunlight which will visit all the world;
108 Its silver pinions must be *cramped* and *numbed*

311-12 sense supplies a love
Encircling me
514 *heavy* darkness and *warm* tears.
602 It *wears* me like a flame:
712-3 offering
Its frail cup of three leaves to the *cold* sun,
794-5 The fern-ranks, like a forest *spread* themselves,
As tho' each pore could feel the element;

The tactual imagery are grounded upon a more intellectual cast of the mind than the auditory and the visual. To the process of image-making they add an element of thinking though the thinking may not always be of a high order. The intellectual element in the imagery of *Pauline* is, however, never too strong to overshadow the sensuous. It is the nature of the youthful mind to be powerfully drawn to sense-perceptions, and even when it thinks, it tends to transmute the ideas into sensible figures. Sometimes this keen sense-perception assumes the form of synaesthesia or sense-analogy in which one variety of sense-experience is expressed in terms of another, as in

524-25 weave such lays
As would encircle me with praise and love;
413 And woven with them were words
410 Clothed in all passion's melodies

516-17 I but catch
A hue, a glance, of what I sing,

216-18 I am not even to catch a tone
Of all the harmonies which he called up,
So one gleam still remains..

In the first three extracts, the combination of musical tunes of which our experience is auditory, is conceived of as a texture which appeals to the sense of touch: in the fourth and the fifth, the metaphor is that of catching a tone as though the tone were some bodied thing; the fourth example finds hues in the tune, and the fifth finds gleams. There is a mixture of metaphors in the last two examples, but what is called a mixed metaphor is sometimes no proof of an intellectual confusion but an evidence, on the contrary, of the poet's imaginative transition from one sense-perception to another so as to identify the two perceptions. These brief images are no less valuable witnesses to the sensuous quality of the poet's imagination than the longer and more ambitious similes. The four elaborate similes of the poem, lines 155-60, 367-74, 450-56. and 469-87, testify to the poet's inchoate romantic fancy. None drawn from the world of actuality, these similes tell us of some Spirit sitting regardless of scorn and neglect from the people around him who praise him when he is gone; of a low voice which calls men to the green woods and fills all the way with dancing shapes leading to the twilight world of the dead; of a world-wanderer who experiences a mirage-like vision of strange towers and walled gardens where songful merrymaking goes on and fairies laugh; of a temple in which the seat of God has been usurped by a dark Spirit, where troops of shadows kneel before the poet to hail him as their king. In these similes, Browning proves himself as one who has so far lived more in the ethereal world of his fancies built upon his readings in romantic tales than in the world of men and manners. Imagery based upon experiences of the actual world grow into prominence in his poetry from *Paracelsus* onwards.

V

Certain words are repeated throughout the poem like varying tunes on the same key and are an index to the tendencies of the poet's mind. The romantic temper, mystery-loving and fanciful, is manifest in the continual recourse to suggestions of magic, enchantment, and spell.

18-19 Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip
Was bathed in her enchantments—
27 Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,
129-30 As one gives up a charm which shuts him out
From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.
169-70 panting but to hear thy name,
Which I believed a spell to me alone,
846-7 I am knit round
As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,
997 I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep

The byways of thought and aspiration, of doubt and faith, into which the poet-lover's mind had strayed, suffering almost a sea-change, naturally strike Browning's imagination as the conjurings of the black art. Closely related to the magic-theme is the notion of unearthly shapes and images.

368-70 A low voice calling Fancy,..
.. .. ..
And she fills all the way with dancing shapes,
734-5 for the moonless night
Has shaped them into images of life,
848-9 Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes
Of strange delight,
969-70 Over the unshaped images which lie
Within my mind's cave—

Like the boy Shelley searching for ghosts, 'pursuing hopes of light talk with the departed dead', Pauline's lover thrills to the contemplation of the dead and their twilight world.

373 As they leave life's path for the twilight world,
Where the dead gather.
39 the past is in its grave,
Tho' its ghost haunts us—
736 Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.

966 Or we will go together, like twin gods
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
Over the dead—to call and to awake—

Giants, among the same romantic-supernatural paraphernalia, occupy the poet's mind with no less potency.

322 a giant,
Standing vast in the sunset—
570 The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
1026 For I seem dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant—

'Giant-ghosts' in line 736 quoted above, keep company with this supernatural fraternity. More benign than the ghosts and milder than the giants, but more metaphysical than either, are the 'spirits' who flit across the pages of the poem.

156 some Spirit there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till its long task completed, it hath risen
And left us, never to return:

472 some dark spirit sitteth in his seat!
510 For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,
As an obedient spirit,

Tormented by the strenuous effort to recover self-composure and excited by the images of these denizens of a world other

than that of mankind, the poet-lover regards his condition as that of fever and sickness.

140 The fever and the stir of after years!
350 The wanderings of delirious dream;
243 if, indeed I tell the past,
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream;
395 the past was breaking
Before the coming, and like fever worked.

650 I begin to know what thing hate is—
To sicken, and to quiver, and grow white,
674 And strait I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
699 All's fever—but when calm shall come again—
817 Commanding for commanding sickens it.

This inner convulsion which is concretized by his imagination as a fever, is due to his inability to find some permanent ideal or principle to which he can attach his inner life. The metaphor for this unattained means to the ideal is 'key', a key for which he searches the dominions of thought and feeling.

413 woven with them were words, which seemed
A key to a new world;
434 I was full of joy—who lived
With Plato—and who had the key to life.
929 Be still to me
A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,

Sometimes he thinks he may find this key, and at other times he misses it altogether. This alternation between attainment and loss metaphorically appears as sinking or buoyancy.

245 my lost soul too soon
Sinks to itself,
489 And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
544 And I would sink again.
670 sunk by error to men's sympathy,

861 I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Deserting me:

874 I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink
1010 And tho' this weak soul sink,

Moments of spiritual depression are many, moments when his spirits seem to be sinking, or to follow the changing metaphor, when he is encircled by the gathering shades of darkness. Dim, dark, darkness, shades,—these are words strewn throughout the poem.

41 lest a worse thing
Wait for us in the darkness.
90 my soul had floated from its sphere
Of wild dominion into its dim orb
Of self—
99 I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever

(The chain metaphor which is an easy transition from the idea of an uncontrollable, ever-wavering will, occurs frequently, and bears special aptness in lines 505, 593, 631.)

514 Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.
550 To face whate'er may lurk in darkness there—
867 when dark hours come;

886 I feel all dim the shift/ Of thought.
1010 tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come,
1026 as one going in the dark

But the restless, energetic imagination of the young poet would not—to follow once again the shifting metaphors—be ultimately chained, would not sink, would not permit itself to be enveloped by any spiritual darkness. It is no city of dreadful night that Browning visualizes; his soul is on fire, it is towards visions of light and radiance that his imagination presses on. The most numerous group of imagery in the poem is evoked by the conception of light

in its several variations, indicated by such words as, radiance, spark, flame, glitter, glow, shine, burn.

19-20 whose brow burned/Beneath the crown,
77-8 I ne'er sung/But as one entering bright halls,
114 I watched his radiant form/Growing less radiant—

145 Like sunlight which will visit all the world;
151 Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever;
161 The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
211 There is one spark of love remaining yet,
218 So one gleam still remains,
362 as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops,
And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun;
392 so much was light
Lent back by others, yet much was my own.
417 Much there! I felt my own mind had conceived,
But there living and burning;
507 genius seen so bright when working forth
519 The radiant sights which dazzle me;
573 hunting far in the sunshine

582 And the late glow of life—changing like clouds,
602 It wears me like a flame;
614 shining towers and dwellings.
619 let me concentrate the sparks it spares.
824 my soul's spark/Expands
841 And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash
The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy
863 Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,
872 Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
880 dazzled by my wealth
911 There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,
Each equal in their radiant course.
1011 Some little word shall light it up again,

The long descriptive passage in lines 732-810 is full of bright-

ness and sunshine: the sun brightens (742) breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts (755); one pond of water gleams (768); the river is a silver thread (777); it is a glowing day (781), the air is sunny (785), the cloud floats, laden with light (786); copses are bright in the sun (805). The light-image[15] dominates Browning's poetry all through. It is not the unearthly light of Shelley, 'the white radiance of Eternity', something 'burning through the inmost veil of Heaven', nor 'the light that never was on sea or land'; it is the light of an intellectual certitude and mental vigour, the light of knowledge that characterizes Browning's vision. While Tennyson is fond of 'glimmering', Browning is devoted to 'radiant'. The difference in the two poets' outlooks on life is manifest even in the images employed in their testamentary poems. A poet of half-lights, Tennyson invokes the 'Sunset and evening star'. Browning would 'at noonday in the bustle of man's worktime Greet the unseen with a cheer'. The most distinctive feature of Browning's life and poetry, this clear and intelligent vision of things inevitably assumes the image of light.

Not merely these recurrent conceptions, certain key-symbols too run throughout the poem, some of them appearing in *Paracelsus* as well. The star is a frequent symbol in Browning's poetry of constancy and transcendental aspiration. The panoramic view of distant towers, towns, and dwellings, rouses his imagination to the romantic quest for the land of heart's desire.

> 450 As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
> Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees,
> Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,

> 611 Wild feeling places me in dream afar,
> In some wide country, where eye can see
> No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
> With shining towers and dwellings.

Without foreshadowing the metaphysical symbolism of Yeats, towers in *Pauline* offer the weary soul an abode of peace and delight. 'Isles and islands conjure up a powerful visual picture, and over and above this, they suggest remoteness'[16]; the suggestion is heightened in *Pauline* by clusters of islands.

> 330 never morn broke clear as those
> On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea:
> 912 There were
> Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept
> For his own joy,
>
> 919 And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,

On a more facile stock response is built the evocativeness of "angel", the symbol of a kindly abstract power.

> 284 an imagination
> Which has been an angel to me—
> 414 A key to a new world; the muttering
> Of angels, of something unguessed by man.
> 710 As one breathing his weakness to the ear
> Of pitying angel—

The agitated soul of Pauline's lover repeatedly yearns for the protection of an encircled zone. In the lines below, no single word acts as a key to this symbol of an environing beneficence, yet the symbolic suggestions are there. The poet-lover would fain seek refuge in love from the warring tendencies of his soul.

> 4 build up a screen
> To shut me in with thee, and from all fear,
>
> 300 I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
> From fear—
>
> 311 but sense supplies a love
> Encircling me and mingling with my life.

749 see this our new retreat
Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,

The significance of the two elaborately-woven symbols in the poem, that of the phoenix-like triumph of Richard III's soul over his decay, and the other of the imperishable beauty of Caravaggio's Andromeda awaiting the advent of some god to rescue her from distress and death, cannot be overlooked by the Browning-student. Each of the two symbols offers Browning a primary principle of the poetic life. The Andromeda myth appeals to his sense of beauty; Kean's acting convinces him of the power of dramatic sympathy. Let us remember the full context in which the poet-lover refers to Andromeda and Kean. In lines 646-54, he has regretted the self-warping obtrusion of his personality. Formerly he could forget himself in fame, friendship, liberty, hero-worship, but now he is a victim of his own self-centred, ever-wavering will. Yet there is solace for him in the transports of imagination. The vision of Andromeda rises before him, changeless and beautiful; the memory of Kean's wonderful capacity for identifying himself with an error-sunk character haunts him. Beauty and dramatic sympathy—these then are the two qualities which a contemplation of the Andromeda picture and the Kean-performance instils into the poet-lover.

The Andromeda symbol centres round a female figure, and it is interesting to note how often the figure of a symbolic woman,—sometimes nude—occurs in *Pauline* and elsewhere in Browning's early poetry.

112: And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes,
As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god—

334: Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

946: As a fair witch turned an old hag at night,
623: for I beheld it in its dawn,
The sleepless harpy with its budding wings,
And I considered whether I should yield
All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,
Finding a recompence in its wild eyes;

Paracelsus,
II, 224-7: Was she who glided through my room of nights,
Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed
The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—

,, II, 357-8: Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,
The Siren's!

,, V, 192-8: In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours!
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me: oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing!

,, V, 666 : But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes.

Sordello, I, 412-27: Shrinking Caryatides
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilied flesh
Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.
The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed;
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some to veil
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,
Some hanging slack an utter helpless length
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
Like priestesses because of sin impure
Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.

To the adolescent sensuous imagination of the young poet, the idea of some intellectual allurement, unshakable and hurtful, appears in the vivid shape of a seductive female, a siren, a young witch, a harpy, a serpent-queen. Like Coleridge's Geraldine, she is 'beautiful exceedingly' but malign in influence, an influence emphasized by her non-human personality and evidenced by the invariably degrading effects to which her companionship leads the victim. What the moral nature abhors, the senses hanker after. When this symbolic female is a human creature, like Andromeda or Proserpine, rather than possessing any taint of tempting sensuality, she spiritually elevates the adorer. The Caryatides of the *Sordello* passage, in spite of the comparison with Eve's lilied flesh, are no animate beings as the sirens and the harpies; their introduction in the poem attests more to a pleasurable brooding picturesqueness than to any possible symbolic influence, although a suggestion of impurity is conveyed in the image of the priestesses penanced for ever because of their sin impure.

The imagery we have considered so far, though feeble in conception and inadequate in expression, have the larger aesthetic merit of close and organic interrelation. Taken alone, any of these images may be a startling revelation of the unity between dissimilars or may fail to make the two hemispheres of the conception cohere. Inevitable in a twenty-year old poet, these occasional failures do not invalidate the worth of his poetic powers. What is far more important than the neatness of individual images is their integration to fundamentally the same poetic spirit. The images coalesce and dissolve into the higher unity of a primal mood which is potently communicated to the reader by the visual or auditory or tactual appeal of the single image. The appreciation of the leading motifs of a creative mood is the rich result that the literary critic

obtains through a study of the image. The imagery of *Pauline* leave us with the knowledge, a knowledge to be broadly qualified as spiritual, of the virile poetic mind of a young man who thinks rapidly and passionately, though not very deeply, who weaves his thoughts into a close-knit texture of imaginative sensibility, loves the undefinable mysteries of a shadowy romantic realm and is impelled at the same time by certain abstract conceptions. His emotions are not those of a purely lyrical temper, nor is his intellect yet powerful enough to subordinate the emotional life to its own suzerain organism. It is a poetic mind not yet certain of its capabilities or preferences, but it is clearly a mind more original than derivative. More than this we cannot deduce from a study of the imagery, for to interpret a poet's personal character on the bases of the imagery he uses may be a perilously misleading process.[17]

VI

The sub-title of *Pauline*, 'A Fragment of a Confession', has led to some confused estimation of the poem. The confession has been believed to be personal; this belief has been stated by, among others, five representative critics of the poet:—

(J. S. Mill; written probably in 1833)

> this writer seems to me possessed with a more intense and morbid self-consciousness than I ever knew in any sane human being—I should think it a sincere confession though of a most unlovable state...he should not attempt to show how a person may be *recovered* from this morbid state—for he is hardly convalescent, and 'what should we speak of but that which we know?'
>
> (*Letters*, ed. Hood, p. 366)

(Joseph Arnould, Browning's friend of youth; written, Sept. 19, 1847)

> did you ever happen upon Browning's 'Pauline'? a strange, wild (in parts singularly magnificent) poet-biography: his own early life as it presented itself to his own soul viewed poetically; in fact, psychologically speaking, his 'Sartor Resartus'.
>
> (Ed. F. G. Kenyon, *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett*, p. 141)

(William Sharp, written 1890)

> 'Pauline' has a unique significance because of its autopsychical hints. (Sharp, *Life*, p. 40)

(Mrs Orr; written 1891)

> we may regard the 'Confession' as to a great extent his own.
>
> (Mrs. Orr, *Life*, p. 58)

(W. C. DeVane; written 1937)

The world has persisted in reading it, however, in the light of its sub-title, 'A Fragment of a Confession' and is convinced that the confession is the author's own. (DeVane, *Handbook*, p. 45)

As against these opinions, we can set three statements of the poet himself, denying the personal and emphasizing the objective character of the poem: (1) the Mill-copy holograph; (2) the Introductory note to the 1868 edition; and (3) a letter[18] written on Feb. 1, 1867, to Richard Herne Shepherd, in which the poet gives the publisher a provisional permission to bring out an edition of *Pauline*. The sentence relevant to our present purpose goes thus:

I will bring myself to say that...if you will strictly confine yourself to 'a few extracts'—and will preface these with mention of the fact that the poem was purely dramatic and intended to head a series of 'Men & Women' such as I have afterwards introduced to the world under somewhat better auspices.....in this case, and not otherwise, I give the leave you desire.

In spite of the disillusioned, sarcastic comment in the holograph, Browning's plan in *Pauline* was a fascinating one, befitting a poet whose mature artistic endeavour fulfilled itself in the dramatic representation of characters. The essentials of the theory of the dramatic monologue are here in the holograph, coloured somewhat by the rather juvenile idea of bluffing the public to the belief that the projected confessions were genuine and by different writers. The poet would assume and realize a number of characters drawn from various walks of life, but the public would not know that the confessions of these characters were in fact the expressions of the objectivized passions of the self-same poet. Whether the public would have proved as gullible as the youthful poet thought they would, is a speculation of some nicety on the trustworthiness of public judgment. The

clear fact that emerges from the statements of the poet is that his bold and comprehensive scheme, of which *Pauline* is but a partial and solitary execution, is dramatic. The poet's statements are strongly at variance with the opinions of his critics. A poet no doubt may be wrong in his estimate of his own work, as Browning himself is wrong in his persistent disparagement of *Pauline*, but surely, no reader ought to ignore the plan which a poet tries to work out in a poem. Browning may or may not have succeeded in the execution of his plan, but he knows best what the basic idea of the poem is. To brush aside this avowal of a scheme is to question the veracity of the poet.

This then is a nice dilemma; on the one hand, is the poet's insistence on the dramatic character of the poem; on the other, the popular belief in its autobiographical character. The answer to this intriguing contrariety of opinions should be sought in Browning's peculiar conception of the nature of the poet. In the Shelley-essay, Browning describes the two types of poets, the subjective and the objective. There is no need here to attempt to determine the exact meanings of these two familiar terms which have been progenitors of many cross-purposes in literary criticism; we shall confine ourselves strictly to the meanings which Browning himself brings to bear upon them. The objective poet, says Browning, is 'one whose endeavour has been to reproduce things external (whether the phenomena of the scenic universe, or the manifested action of the human heart and brain) with an immediate reference, in every case, to the common eye and apprehension of his fellow men, assumed capable of receiving and profiting by this reproduction.'[19] There are two parts to this statement: the first describes the source of poetic themes, viz., things external which include both the world of nature and the world of man; the second states the aim of poetry which is to deal with the common concerns of

human life. These ideas are elaborated further on in the essay: 'The objective poet, in his appeal to the aggregate human mind, chooses to deal with the doings of men, (the result of which dealing, in its pure form, when even description, as suggesting a describer, is dispensed with, is what we call dramatic poetry)'[20]. Browning thus tells us which particular literary form suits the objective poet best, and how the dramatic work is distinguished by a self-elimination on the author's part. The objective poet appeals rather to those feelings that are common to humanity than to any individual idiosyncrasy. Finally, Browning dwells upon the relation between the poet and his poetry: 'Such a poet is properly the fashioner; and the thing fashioned, his poetry, will of necessity be substantive, projected from himself and distinct.'[21] This description of the objective poet excellently fits the poet of *Pippa Passes*, *Men and Women*, *Dramatis Personae*, and *The Ring and the Book*, for Browning chooses to deal with the doings of men and women of a variety wide as the world itself:—lovers happy in the fulfilment of love, lovers crushed by frustration or still buoyant; a queen by whose order and in whose presence the faithless lover is killed, and a wife who sinks her individuality for the sake of her husband's love; a priest immersed in beatific ecstasy or a priest gurgling in gnarled anger; a young Hebrew visionary or a modern spiritualist impostor; casuists and cowards; poets, painters, and musicians; criminals and sweet angelic creatures. There is no reader but must cry out at the end, 'Here's God's plenty, indeed!' This is one Browning, the dramatic and objective poet, whose creations are substantive. Projected from his much-encompassing imagination, these creations yet maintain a distinct life of their own, and that criticism errs which reads Browning's personal character in that of his creatures. He is greater than his creatures; he creates a motley crowd of self-analyzing men and women,—

and himself, like the Almighty Jove in his Olympian height, beholds the pageant of passions and thoughts moving below.

Consider now Browning's idea of the subjective poet. He 'is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth.' As regards subject-matter, this poetry differs from the other by its emphasis not on the thing perceived but on the perceiver, the thing not as it is but as it appears to the poet's special sensibility. What he produces emanates from his inmost personality; it is an 'effluence' that 'cannot be easily considered in abstraction from his personality,—being indeed the very radiance and aroma of his personality, projected from it but not separated.' The subject-matter of this poetry is within the poet and not without. The poet and his work are one. It follows then that the subject-matter consists not of the common concerns and acts of men engaged in their everyday pursuits but of the 'primal elements of humanity'. And why should the poet look within? It is because he conceives of poetry as a means, however imperfect and partial, to the apprehension of the Supreme Intelligence. He appeals 'through himself to the absolute Divine'. This mystic, almost religious, conception of poetry was natural to a man who had inherited a strongly religious temper from his mother. It is a conception with a hoary history, and in English Poetics, runs intermittently from Sidney to Shelley. Browning consistently holds to this doctrine of poetry as an instrument of serving the Supreme Intelligence. The doctrine is also stated in Browning's letter to Ruskin: 'A poet's affair is with God, to whom he is accountable, and of whom is his reward: look elsewhere, and you find misery enough.'[22] Aprile, the phantom-poet of *Paracelsus*, states the same faith when he says:

I would die: preserving so throughout my course
God full on me, as I was full on men. (*Paracelsus*, II, 482-3)

To Miss Barrett, Browning wrote:

The fearless fresh living work you describe, is the *only* Poem to be undertaken now by you or anyone that *is* a Poet at all; the only reality, the only effective piece of service to be rendered God and man; it is what I have been all my life intending to do. (*The Browning Love Letters*, I, p. 38)

Browning aspires to the secret alchemy of the supreme subjective imagination which 'purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being'[23] and of this he writes to Miss Barrett:

But then—what I have printed gives no knowledge of me—it evidences abilities of various kinds, if you will—and a dramatic sympathy with certain modifications of passion...*that* I think—But I never have begun, even, what I hope I was born to begin and end—'R. B. a poem'...these scenes and song-scraps *are* such mere and very escapes of my inner power.
(Ibid. I, p. 17)

Thus in Browning, we witness a remarkable duality of ideals. He believes in the glory of subjective art at the same time that he practises the dramatic technique, trying objectively to analyze human motives. But there is no contradiction in this duality even though sometimes his poetry alternates between the two ideals, the subjective and the objective, the one ideal keeping clear of the other. Miss Barrett's sympathetic intuition permits her to interpret Browning's poetic character correctly:

You have in your vision two worlds or to use the language of the schools of the day, you are both subjective and objective in the habits of your mind. You can deal both with abstract thought and with human passion in the most passionate sense. Thus, you have an immense grasp in Art. (Ibid. I, p. 8)

This duality of Browning's poetic faculty is observed also by Joseph Milsand between whose review of Browning's poetry in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 1851, and the poet's Shelley-essay, there are, as Griffin points out,[24] close similarities of thought. 'In Milsand's estimate of Browning as primarily and most preciously an introspective poet, secondarily an artist or "maker", there lurks the germ of Browning's doctrine that there are two kinds of poetry, the subjective and the objective, of which the first is infinitely the higher.' The doctrine of the two types of poets is not of so late a growth as 1851 as Griffin suggests, nor need we presume Browning's indebtedness to Milsand in regard to this doctrine. It might as well be that Milsand himself had derived these ideas from Browning. In any case, the idea of this duality is a commonplace of criticism, and, in the words of Miss Barrett, belongs to the language of the schools of the day. What is far more important than Browning's theoretical acknowledgment of the dichotomy of the poetic nature is the presence of such a dichotomy within Browning's own poetic self. In the Shelley-essay, he says,

> Nor is there any reason why these two modes of poetic faculty may not issue hereafter from the same poet in successive perfect works, examples of which, according to what are now considered the exigences of art, we have hitherto possessed in distinct individuals only.

Browning's vision of the ideal poetic creation emphasizes not the parallel presence of the two faculties but their perfect coalescence. He states his belief in this vision in the Shelley-essay of 1852, but as we have seen, the idea occurs in his correspondence with Miss Barrett, and occurs also in *Paracelsus* and *Pauline*.

> But not these alone
> Should claim my care; for common life, its wants
> And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues:

The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
Than he his own heart's language, I would live
For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds; they should be mine henceforth,
Imbued with me, though free to all before:
For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this
Would need a meaner spirit, than the first;
Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit:

(*Paracelsus*, II, 555-569)

This is Aprile's aim as a poet. He would deal with the wants and ways of common life, and so thoroughly incorporate them within his imaginative self that the clay of common life would be transmuted into rich gems. The treatment of common life would be objective; in one art-form after another, he would express 'every passion sprung from man, conceived by man'; his paintings, architecture, oratory, would be 'all filled with men, men everywhere'; 'no thought which ever stirred a human breast should be untold.'[25] And as one reads this passionate speech of Aprile, one realizes the identity between Aprile's idea of adopting a number of art-forms to express the same fundamental truth of life, and Browning's scheme expounded in the Mill-copy holograph, according to which he would assume and realize several personalities. The Kean-passage of *Pauline* records this desire of the poet to identify himself with an imagined character:

I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,
Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy, (669-670)

The dramatic, objective approach to the various manifestations of life is also indicated in the lines,

And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who shadowed out the stages of all life, (883-4)

The dramatic representations of men and women to which Pauline's lover and Aprile both aspire, are ultimately impregnated by the selfsame poetic personality and are the emanations of the same subjective imagination which holds to the primal elements of humanity in order to apprehend the Supreme Intelligence. Thus Browning's idea of a harmonious combination of the subjective and the objective faculties of poetry, expressed clearly in the Shelley-essay, is anticipated, in a less defined form, in *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*. Browning partially achieves this combination in his mature poetry. F. L. Lucas[26] regards Browning as 'a creature of contradictions' because he 'bared his soul to the world in a hundred transparent disguises and yet denounced, with a peck at Shakespeare, the mere notion that he could unlock his heart.' There is really no contradiction in this if we correctly appreciate Browning's poetic purpose and his achievement at their best. Dramatic representations of men and women in moments of psychological crises, the poems are, at the same time, embodiments of the primal elements of humanity, reflexions of the essential personality of the poet who 'by his loftier vision', lifts his fellows 'with their half-apprehensions, up to his own sphere, by intensifying the import of details and rounding the universal meaning.'[27]

In *Pauline*, Browning makes his earliest attempt to combine an objective treatment of life with a basic subjectivity of outlook. The execution is, however, too inadequate for the scheme, and although we should not look upon the poem as an autobiography since autobiographical writing involves a deliberate narration of personal facts,—and if there is a dearth of anything in this poem it is a dearth of facts,—we can easily presume a strong impress of essential personality. Browning himself recognized this affinity when he admitted

in the Mill-copy holograph that 'the present abortion was the first work of the *Poet* of the batch, who would have been more legitimately *myself* than most of the others.' That Browning admits no more than a spiritual sympathy and disavows any factual identity is proved by the latter half of the sentence, 'but I surrounded him with all manner of (to my then notion) poetical accessories, and had planned quite a delightful life for him.' Browning failed in his attempt to harmonize the subjective and the objective faculties in *Pauline* because this spiritual affinity is too powerful to permit a competent dramatic treatment. The innate eager lyricism of the poet, heightened further by his romantic models, frequently bursts through the crust of the dramatic plan. The poem is neither by intention, nor in fact, autobiographical in the sense that the *Prelude* or *Childe Harold* is autobiographical, and yet the essential personality of the poet, with all its ardour of immature passions and the bewilderment of mutually-clashing ideals, is writ large in the poem. With unerring judgment Mill had fixed upon the poet's intense self-consciousness as his besetting error—a consciousness which prevented the poet from reaching his ideal of a harmony of faculties. The confessional mood comes easy to a poet whose ego is urgent for expression. The mighty process of the liberation of the ego that distinguished the early nineteenth century, led to the popularity of an analysis of the poet's inner life as a theme of poetry, and the confessional mood stands out in the works of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley. *Pauline* is a personal confession in so far as parts of the hero's confessions reveal the primal tendencies of his inner life. It will be unfair and misleading to stretch the parallelism so far as to identify the poet entirely with the hero. We need not, for example, consider the 'shames and shapes' haunting the poet-lover as Browning's own: the 'dissipation', 'the cunning envy', 'falsehood which

so long had spotted me,' the 'heavy darkness and warm tears', the hate that makes the poet-lover sicken, quiver, and grow white; the sin and lust and pride which knit the hero round,—are all, at the most, dramatic heightenings of the poet's ideological waverings, and cannot be accepted as literal truth. The nature-passages are full of ideal landscape, and the reality of Pauline herself, as we shall see, is a highly questionable matter. But there are a number of features in the poem in which we can trace with more or less definiteness the personality of the poet. Viewed in isolation, none of these features would, perhaps, be regarded as any serious evidence for a personal stamp; in the mass, they strengthen the presumption of such a personal affinity.

VII

What are the features of the poem that help us in discerning its personal element? The symbols 'V. A. XX' appended to the prefatory Latin quotation were explained by Browning as 'the Latin abbreviation of *Vixi Annos*—"I was twenty years old"—that is the imaginary subject of the poem was of that age.' The fact that the author himself was of exactly the same age cannot be regarded as a simple coincidence but may be interpreted as the author's unconscious self-identification with the hero. Among the textual evidences strengthening this presumption of identity are the following:

(i) the Kean reference;
(ii) the rhapsody on and the invocation to Shelley;
(iii) the Plato-passage;
(iv) love of small creatures;
(v) love of music and painting;
(vi) love of books, ancient literature, Greek myths;
(vii) the Andromeda reference;
(viii) the long restraint which chained down the spirit of the poet-lover is analogous to the restrictions under which the boy Browning chafed in Mr Ready's school.

The influence of Shelley on Browning has been noted by all students of the younger poet. DeVane puts the matter succinctly thus:

> Shelley made Browning the poet he was; he gave him poetical and political ideas, method and technique, and pointed out that the proper subject of poetry is the soul of the poet himself.
>
> (*Handbook*, p. 11)

Somewhat of an overstatement, this sentence points to one of the most important sources of Browning's thought. In *Pauline*, the influence of Shelley consists mainly in (a) an idealistic and liberal vision of life; (b) a powerful sway of emotions, and (c) a certain religiosity of temper. Browning's idealism in this his earliest work assumes the shape of 'wild dreams of beauty and of good' (30). The hero is 'full of hope...trusting in truth and love' (83-88); he desires to enjoy a 'hope, or part, or care, in human kind' (130); long restraint has chained his soul (344); 'schemes and systems went and came' in his life (399); he believes in Plato who 'sent forth hopes and longings' (409); he was 'vowed to liberty, men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven' (424). Shelley's tirade against institutional religion, his anti-commercialism, invectives against the wealth of nations and the trumpery of kingship, his social criticisms in *Queen Mab* and the *Revolt of Islam*, are not in *Pauline*, but the idealistic inspiration is here. The ideas of revolutionary politics, especially the belief in the people's cause, which Browning imbibed from Shelley, bore fruit in Sordello's determination to be the 'Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy', to sing of the 'warped souls and bodies' of Italian peasants and common men; in the struggles of Pym and his fellow Parliamentarians against Royalty (*Strafford*); in the patriotic resolve of Luigi to assassinate the Emperor of Austria (*Pippa Passes*). In the plays, this political passion for espousing a freedom-movement continues, ending finally in a spirit of disillusionment. The sharp contrast in the characters of King Victor and King Charles: the father, a man of a 'fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources', and the son of 'an extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will,'—to borrow the words of Browning's preface to the

play—is exhibited against a setting of a tyrannized people. *The Return of the Druses* shows the attempt of a patriot, Djabal, to deliver his people from foreign domination but his motive is largely mixed up with a fanatical religious self-glorification. Valence's (*Colombe's Birthday*) championship of the common people yields only to his ardour as a lover. The last of the plays, *A Soul's Tragedy*, telling the story of Chiappino's opportunist bid for leadership of the people of Faenza, indicates the loss of the poet's faith in struggles for liberty. The course of Browning's political thought is from a revolutionary ardour to a staid, academic interest in later life. Perhaps the spirit of Victorianism was too strong for him; perhaps his realism and powers of rational analysis showed him too many loopholes in freedom-movements as he studied them,[28] to support his early romantic faith in liberty. In none of the plays, does such a movement for its own sake become the main theme; a movement is only a convenient setting for some hero, a Parliamentarian leader or a Sardinian prince. The shewing up of the dishonesty of the leader in the last play indicates the cooling off of the poet's revolutionary ardour. The cause of Liberty never inspires Browning to the noble passion of *Prometheus Unbound* or *Hellas*, or the *Songs Before Sunrise* of his younger contemporary. Of his two important later treatments of political themes, *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* is an ironical exposure of the political doctrine of expediency, while the *Parleying with George Bubb Dodington* is a satire on Disraeli's distrust of democracy. It is a far cry from *Pauline* to *Dodington;* the poet of Liberty in the abstract, has turned into the poet-analyst of practical politicians and their protean ways. The beautiful Shelleyan streak of idealism, aglow in *Pauline*, does not endure. Browning parts company with Shelley, outgrows the idealism, and as his sonnet entitled 'Why I am a Liberal' shows, shrinks into complacent whiggism in the eighties.

It is not possible to measure exactly to what extent we may attribute the emotional fervour of *Pauline* to the influence of Shelley's poetry. This fervour is particularly noticeable in the descriptions of nature, in the lines to Shelley, and in those to Jesus. The pulsating sincerity of these passages grows out of the poet's genuine passion for each of these objects of emotional fervour. The general prevalence of an emotional quality in the rest of the poem is largely due to the youthful Browning's natural susceptibility to feelings brought into clear relief by the subject-matter, viz. the study of the mind of a passionate poet-lover. The gusto of the emotion sometimes smothers the progress of the analysis. For instance, in line 89, the poet-lover starts an examination of his soul imprisoned by its self-absorption. This image of the imprisonment of the soul appeals to his emotion so strongly as to interrupt the analysis, and the poet-lover proceeds on to a long, delighted reverie of the image. Occasionally, the emotion and the analysis fuse together (515-559), yet, generally speaking, they tend to remain separate and self-sufficient. In spite of the sweep of sentiments which distinguishes the style of *Pauline* from that of the monologues of the middle period, the intellectual quality of this poem remains stronger than the emotional. This 'fragment of a confession' shows how the poet-lover tries to *think* of his feelings, to dissect them. In the following passage, for example, this intellectual power is exhibited in its most argumentative form:

634-647: And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,
For I cannot so narrow me, but that
I still exceed it; in their elements
My love would pass my reason — but since here
Love must receive its objects from this earth,
While reason will be chainless, the few truths
Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell

All love below; — then what must be that love
Which, with the object it demands, would quell
Reason, tho' it soared with the seraphim?
No — what I feel may pass all human love,
Yet fall far short of what my love should be;
And yet I seem more warped in this than aught,
For here myself stands out more hideously.

The poetry of this passage is manifestly born of an argumentative passion, not a passion of sentiment. There are several passages of fine emotional intensity, yet the usual bias of the poet's imagination is in favour of thought and argument. Browning admired Donne at a period when few read the seventeenth century 'metaphysical', yet the younger poet's argumentative lyricism has a character different from the elder's. Browning's mature writings are truly 'metaphysical' by virtue of an incorporation of apparently recondite, remote, even esoteric learning, into a quick, sudden motion of the imagination. But the argumentative methods of medieval dialectics which were so favourite a weapon with the seventeenth century 'metaphysicals', Browning never employs, except partly in *Fifine*. Illuminating images are sometimes presented but the passion of the poetry lies essentially in the intellectual timbre of the argument. This is brilliantly exemplified in *Saul*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, and in some speeches of Paracelsus. That the intellectual character of the poem is more pronounced than the emotional is emphasized not only by the very conception of the scheme, certain features of the style (such as the plethora of punctuation marks and the tactual imagery) and the poet's insistent predisposition towards argumentative passion, but also, in spite of the great beauty of occasional emotionalism, by the generally unconvincing nature of the emotions themselves. Hints of Byronism occur here and there. As the Byronic hero declares:

I've taught me other tongues, and in strange eyes
Have made me not a stranger; . . . .
. . . . I twine
My hopes of being remember'd in my line
With my land's language:

(*Childe Harold*, IV, viii, ix)

so too, Browning's poet-lover, also an exile from England, records his love for the motherland:

I cherish most
My love of England — how her name a word
Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat: (695-97)

The suggestion of the exile betrays an attitudinizing and dilutes the sincerity of the emotion. There appear, besides, hints of Childe Harold's 'I-have-seen-much-and-suffered-much' temper in the poet-lover's repeated admissions of shames and taints and woes. The weakness of the emotions is partly inherent in the form of the poem. A confession (which this poem is) presupposes (i) a consciousness of guilt, and (ii) a penitence for that guilt. The depth of the confessional passion depends largely upon the sensibility of the mind concerned and the nature of the guilt involved. The intense self-consciousness of the poet-lover was recognized by Mill as Browning's own, and Browning admitted the justice of the criticism when he wrote to Miss Barrett:

I know myself surely—and always have done so, for is there not somewhere the little book I first printed when a boy, with John Mill, the metaphysical head, *his* marginal note that 'the writer possesses a deeper self-consciousness than I ever knew in a sane human being'.

(*Browning Love Letters*, I, p. 29)

The principle of restlessness to which Pauline's lover confesses, a principle 'which would be all, have, see, know,

taste, feel, all', and the self-supremacy of the consciousness which exists 'as a centre to all things' and to which may be tracked all affections, passions, feelings, powers,' is the evidence of a hypersensitive and mobile mind which has only a hydropic thirst for experience but knows not what it wants.

My sympathies are very wide and general, — always have been — and the natural problem has been the giving unity to their object, concentrating them instead of dispersing. (Ibid.)

Compare what Pauline's lover says:

let me concentrate the sparks it spares. (619)

Such a mind must naturally drift from ideal to ideal and afterwards repent having forsaken the earlier ideals. An ever-wavering will of this kind, and regrets consequent upon the waverings, are quite usual for a passionate, youthful mind; but to these, Browning adds an extremely vivid imagination and ruthless analysis. As a result, the mind of the youthful Browning is extraordinarily complex and in the absence of fuller details of biography can never be fully understood. These complex passions and thoughts have been heightened by the dramatic scheme of the poem but not sufficiently supported by background-action. As with Browning, so in the case of the poet-lover, we may assume no actual guilt or moral aberration; at the most, there is an ideological flux which upsets the mental equanimity of the young man and temporarily distorts his vision of beauty which reappears, once the self-purifying confession has been made: 'Suddenly Beauty rose on me again' (1006). But the tremendous self-searching and agitation, unsupported by facts, makes the mind of the poet- lover altogether devoid of typicality; it is 'morbid', as Mill observed, and the expression of it is so attenuated that the emotional content fails to convince.

The mature poetry of Browning succeeds in basing an emotional content on facts. At the time of the composition of *Pauline*, Browning had no experience of the world worth the

name. As a boy, he was a bookish, precocious young fellow who had to be withdrawn from his school because he was too far ahead of the other boys. The only son of a family, too small for Victorian standards, he must have been looked upon by his father as the inheritor of his own unfulfilled ambitions. The boy read widely in his father's library, played with his improvised menagerie, admired the beauty of Camberwell Common, and in short, lived a life 'apart from all'. Till the time of *Pauline* and even later, this solitariness continued. The poet-lover's statement of an aim may be regarded as Browning's own:

(440-43) 'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
Which was all new to me; my theories
Were firm, so I left them, to look upon
Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys;

When it was suggested that Browning should qualify for the Bar,

> he appealed to his father, whether it would not be better for him to see life in its best sense, and cultivate the powers of his mind, than to shackle himself in the very outset of his career by a laborious training foreign to that aim. (Griffin, *Life*, p. 54)

The desire for looking on real life was natural, because, as his sister said: 'The fact was, poor boy, he had outgrown his social surroundings. They were absolutely good, but they were narrow; it could not be otherwise; he chafed under them.'[29] Some experience of life, of 'men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys', came with the travel to Russia in 1834, and his association with the theatre in the succeeding years but, judging by the mass of reading that Browning was involved in in the writing of *Paracelsus*, *Strafford* and *Sordello*, and the comparative simplicity of the subject-matter of *Pippa Passes* and the dramatic lyrics of the forties, it may be said that experiences of life amenable to creative organization came to

him only after the Italian tour of 1838. At any rate, in *Pauline*, the poet's lack of experience partly accounts for the failure to correlate the emotional content to a convincing background of facts.

If however the poet's lack of experience deprives *Pauline* of concreteness, the stimulus Browning had found in the world of books, in Greek legends particularly, became the source of some beautiful imagery. His biographers present an imposing list of the books he had read as a boy; in *Pauline*, he refers to his 'first dawn of life/Which passed alone with wisest ancient books' and we have such lovely lines as,

> A god
> Wandering after beauty, or a giant
> Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter
> Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief
> Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.

It was perhaps lines of such beauty that evoked the enthusiasm of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, And Yeats, reading of the old hunter talking with gods, wanted to

> Demonstrate in my own life
> What Robert Browning meant
> By an old hunter talking with Gods.
> (*Last Poems*, 'Are You Content')

The mature Browning wrote not infrequently on Greek themes and like his own Fra Lippi who advanced beyond the Greeks in methods of painting, he claimed to have improved upon the fanciful methods of Gerard de Lairesse arguing that 'Bearded experience bears not to be duped/Like boyish fancy.' The young romantic poet who 'stood beside the naked Swift-footed' and 'bound his forehead with Proserpine's hair' in *Pauline*, changed eventually into the realistic, gnarled poet of *Hohenstiel-Schwangau* and the *Inn Album*. *Pauline* remains a splendid storehouse of imagery growing out of literary reminiscences.

VIII

In the Shelley-essay, Browning calls Shelley 'a man of religious mind, because every audacious negative cast up by him against the Divine, was interpenetrated with a mood of reverence and adoration,—and because I find him everywhere taking for granted some of the capital dogmas of Christianity, while most vehemently denying their historical basement.' Written about twenty years after *Pauline*, these words bear a significance, in retrospect, for his first work. The youthful temper is naturally religious; this natural tendency, in Browning's case, was further intensified by the piety of his evangelical mother. In the fifteenth year of his life, Browning's faith reeled under the shock of Voltaire's atheism and Shelley's anti-clericalism. For a time, the spirit of Shelley governed his thoughts and ideals; he became, 'for two years, a practising vegetarian'. 'This Shelley period of Robert Browning's life —that which intervened between *Incondita* and *Pauline*—remained, nevertheless, one of rebellion and unrest, to which many circumstances may have contributed besides the influence of the one mind.'[30] What those 'many circumstances', hinted at by Mrs Orr, might have been, one is curious to know. We would have prized a personal record of this rebellion and unrest. What exactly were the obstinate questionings that perplexed the young poet's mind? Did he merely repeat the arguments of Shelley's essay on atheism or did he have any say of his own? A letter of Sarah Flower, written in November 1827 to W. J. Fox, furnishes the only clue to this period of *sturm und drang* of Browning's early life:

My mind has been wandering a long time, and now it seems to have lost sight of that only invulnerable hold against the assaults

> of the warring world, a firm belief in the genuineness of the Scriptures... The cloud has come over me gradually, and I did not discover the darkness in which my soul was shrouded until, in seeking to give light to others, my own gloomy state became too settled to admit of doubt. It was in answering Robert Browning that my mind refused to bring forward argument, turned recreant, and sided with the enemy. (Griffin, *Life*, p. 46)

The only utterance of this atheistical inclination to be found in *Pauline* is the brief statement, 'I have denied thee calmly' (839). The tumultuous and rebellious phase of Browning's inner life precedes *Pauline* which records his recovery of faith in Jesus. The intellectual process by which Browning reached across the valley of Doubt to hope and faith, has not been given in the poem. Doubt may reveal a man's character more truly than faith. The troubled sections of *In Memoriam* are at least as true an index to the poet's character as the faith-asserting final sections. We cannot be sure from *Pauline* whether there was any rational process at all in Browning's religious recovery or whether the restored belief was just as sentimental as the doubt itself. At any rate, whatever rationalization there is in Browning's religious position, occurs in his later poetry, in *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*. Rationalized or not, the passage enshrining the poet's soul-wrung surrender to Jesus, gives, along with the nature-passages, the finest poetry in *Pauline*. The passion that throbs beneath the words of devotion to Jesus, the words expressing a sense of sinfulness and penitence, are comparable to some of the sermons of the great Dean of St Paul's, Donne himself. Of all Browning's works, *Pauline* alone offers the reader a sense of sinfulness of profound personal poignancy.

IX

The nature-passages of *Pauline* are among its abiding beauties. Browning is not usually regarded as a nature-poet, particularly in view of his well-known statement that he cared for nature a great deal, but for human beings a great deal more. With all his brilliant anticipations of Darwinism and occasional interests in scientific phenomena, Browning had not the temper of a naturalist. The authoritative opinion of J. W. Beach is:

> In his general philosophy, Browning had little of the spirit of naturalism. The distinctive mark of naturalism is submission to the natural order as we apprehend it by natural means: joyous acceptance of our place in this order, reconciliation, or at least a disposition to make the most of it as we find it, without recourse to supernatural inspirations.
>
> (*The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry*, p. 447)

Again,

> The disposition to substitute nature for God is the mark of naturalism, and is more or less present in the most characteristic nature poets. (Ibid. p. 6)

One who believes in the sovereignty of God's will and the concomitant subordination of every other thing to that will and power, who does not accept the mystic inter-relation between nature and man as the be-all and the end-all of existence, can never be a naturalist. Even Wordsworth, a more thorough-going naturalist in his early poetry than the writers on natural theology, advanced on to the doctrine of God's supremacy over the phenomenal universe. In his great final speech, Paracelsus says how he has felt:

642-651 What God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds; in whom *is* life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is he :
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view;

(*Paracelsus*, V)

Evolution tends to mankind, 'and, man produced, all has its end thus far'.

773 In completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues,
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares...
... for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.

(Ibid. V)

Thus natural phenomena occupy but a minor place in the scheme of the universe where God and man are the two protagonists. Browning's metaphysical powers are not concerned with any interpretation of nature; natural phenomena can, at best, offer man an unceasing source of joy and beauty. It is by a recital of these joys and glories in *Saul* that David tries to buoy up the sunken spirits of King Saul. In our own times, when romantic naturalism has virtaully gone out of poetry, Browning's unmetaphysical, exuberant enjoyment of the myriad beauties of nature ought to evoke more praise than

it did in his own times. The implications of his general philosophy with which Browning in his later poetry sometimes coloured his nature-passages, are entirely absent in *Pauline*, and therefore the value of *Pauline* as a store-house of pure nature-poetry is considerable. It has been said[31] that Browning felt no mystery in nature. True of the later poetry, this statement does not apply to *Pauline* where the youthful poet's sensuousness, reinforced by the influence of Shelley and Keats, revels in the wonder of nature's beauties.

66–68 The wind murmuring in the damp copse,
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing
Betrayed by sleep.

181-85 Old woods which will live
But by its banks, untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
In light as something lieth half of life
Before God's foot.

733-37 The woods
Waving and muttering—for the moonless night
Has shaped them into images of life,
Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.

The image in each of these instances has a film of mystery as its raiment. The mystery has its source in the vitality of the sensuous apprehension, not in any metaphysical supernaturalism. 'I can live all the life of plants, and gaze/Drowsily on the bees that flit and play' (716-17). Of this intensely passionate love of nature, Browning writes to Miss Haworth:

I have, you are to know, such a love for flowers and leaves—some leaves—that I every now and then,—in an impatience at being unable to possess myself of them thoroughly, to see them quite, satiate myself with their scent,—bite them to bits. (*Letters*, p.1)

William Sharp writes how the boy Browning would lie

beside a hedge or deep in meadow grasses, or under a tree... and there give himself up so absolutely to the life of the moment that even shy birds would alight close by and sometimes venturesomely poise themselves on suspicious wings for a brief space upon his recumbent body, I have heard him say that his faculty of observation at that time would not have appeared despicable to a Seminole or an Iroquois; he saw and watched everything. (Sharp, *Life*, p. 96)

Blended with this passionateness is a power of observation which produces such beautiful expressions as 'the night of sounds' (719), 'the misty sun-warm water' (725), 'breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts' (75), 'tongues of bank go shelving in the waters' (761), 'the pale-throated snake' (762), 'creeping plants stretch out their twined hair' (774), 'great cloud floats, laden with light, like a dead whale that white birds pick' (785). In the other qualities of poetry, the mature Browning left his achievement in *Pauline* far behind, but I doubt if he ever surpassed the sensitive beauty of these nature-passages. The joyous observation of the aspects of nature is often presented by a method that may be described as cinematographic. It is not things at rest which move Browning as they do Keats; the dynamic energy of his imagination must be attracted to things in a state of motion. That this quick, shifting motion of the imagination is imparted to the method of description itself, may be seen from the following extracts:

798-99 Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set
On a heap of rocks,

748-49 No, ere the hot noon come
Dive we down—safe;—see this our new retreat

732-33 Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
Between the sullen river and the woods

740-41 We will pass to morning—
Morning—the rocks, and vallies, and old woods.

765-66 Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in:
This the very heart of the woods—
782 See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky!

This method Browning continued in his later poetry:

Sordello, I, 10: Appears/Verona . . .

„ I,73-4. Lo, the past is hurled
In twain: up-thrust, out-staggering on the world.

Meeting at Night: Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match.

X

If the poem is not strictly autobiographical but only bears a personal significance in parts, what is the status of Pauline? Is she too a figment of fancy, one of the 'poetical accessories' with which the poet surrounded his hero to fulfil the plan of a delightful life for him? Mrs Orr[32] is inclined to identify Pauline with Eliza Flower: 'If, in spite of his denials, any woman inspired *Pauline*, it can be no other than she'. Eliza and Sarah were two talented sisters, daughters of the editor of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, Benjamin Flower, and wards of W. J. Fox. Eliza was nine years the senior of Robert, and whatever admiration, even a calf love, he might have entertained for her when, as a boy of twelve or thirteen, he met her, could hardly have endured till the time of *Pauline*. Her own affections became probably engaged, admits Mrs Orr, and we learn from William Sharp,[33] who had it 'on good authority', that in his nineteenth year, Browning had a more powerful experience of the passion.

> He became ardently in love with a girl of rare beauty, a year or two older than himself, but otherwise, possibly, no inappropriate lover for this wooer. Why and when this early passion came to a close, or was rudely interrupted, is not known. What is certain is that it made a deep impression on the poet's mind. It may be that it, of itself, or wrought to a higher emotion by his hunger after ideal beauty, was the source of 'Pauline'.

It seems possible that this unknown woman, rather than Eliza, was the subject of Browning's passion in his earliest work. There is a freshness and ardour in the passion embodied in the poem which makes one think that the love was a recent one.

And yet it is no use at this time of the day running after the will-o'-the-wisp of the conjectural woman whom Browning had in mind when he wrote *Pauline*; her personality counts for woefully little in this poem. Mill went so far as to call Pauline 'evidently a mere phantom'.

> All about her is a pile of inconsistency—he neither loves her nor fancies he loves her, yet insists upon *talking* love to her—if she *existed* and loved him, he treats her most ungenerously and unfeelingly. All his aspirings and sparrings and regrets point to other things, never to her—then he *pays her off* towards the end by a piece of flummery, amounting to the modest request that she will love him and live with him and give herself up to him *without* his *loving her*, *moyennant quoi* he will think her and call her everything that is handsome and he promises her that she shall find it mightily pleasant. Then he leaves off by saying he knows he shall have changed his mind by tomorrow, and despise these intents which seem so far! (*Letters*, p. 366)

Mill's sarcasm on the relation between Pauline and her lover is the facile sarcasm applicable to all expressions of sentiment. A little sympathy in approach, and one can find a good deal of consistency and sincerity in the young man's love for Pauline. There are lines in the poem (739-40, 896-900) which sharply remind us of the flesh-and-blood reality of Pauline. When excessive self-absorption benumbs his faculties, love makes a reconquest by spreading the tentacles of sensuous appeal:

311 Sense supplies a love
Encircling me and mingling with my life.

Pauline, then, is not entirely the denizen of an ethereal world of fancy, no 'phantom', unless one extends the meaning of the word to the Wordsworthian sense in 'She was a phantom of delight'. Her personality is so elusive a thing because, in the first place, the poem is not primarily a love poem, and in the second, the poet has idealized her. Love is a power beside which

despair can never live (75). Faith in the beloved, because of this sovereign capacity of love, is a higher experience than love itself (43). Any deviation from the path of love, love that is a steadying, health-giving force, is certain to bring shame upon the lover.

> 28 I had been spared this shame, if I had sate
> By thee for ever.

Pauline represents this 'naked love' (10), this untrammelled force of a pure, selfless, purificatory love. She is like the Confessor of the Catholic Church who himself remains unsullied the while he receives the outpourings of the sinner.

> 709 As one breathing his weakness to the ear
> Of pitying angel.

Radiating psychic health to the agony-tossed lover, this sovereign force of love is almost the son-love for the mother:

> 947 We will go hand in hand,
> I will go with thee, even as a child,
> Looking no further than thy sweet commands.

Time and again, the awareness of the supreme need of such a love in his life makes the lover implore in quivering tones:

> 47 And I look to thee, and I trust in thee,
> 689 And love!—do I not love thee, my Pauline?
> 903 Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought but me;
> Leave me not.

Love with Browning is a comprehensive faculty of the human mind of which woman-love is only one, though the most valuable, facet. This love is a sensitive human sympathy which the poet-lover feels for all things of the earth, and because of this very earthliness, this love yields place to Reason which may be interpreted as Knowledge and which 'soars with the

seraphim' (643). In a vague way, the lover sometimes even feels that love is a super-terrestrial power beyond his reach. In *Paracelsus*, the two types of love are contrasted; the romantic, transcendental love represented by Aprile, that soars above earthly bonds and is of the spirit spiritual in its every essence; the other is that advocated by Festus,—and this advocacy patently has the sanction of the poet,—love that stoops to conquer, love that is thoroughly human, covering a wide ground of human experience of the passion, from 'love which blends with love, heart answering heart,' to love which 'spends itself in silent mad idolatry of some pre-eminent mortal.'

The metaphysics of love occupy Browning at a later stage than *Pauline*. Speculations as to the nature of love in the abstract which we find in *Epipsychidion* ('True love in this differs from gold and clay, that to divide is not to take away'), and the Platonic quest ('In many mortal forms I rashly sought, the shadow of that idol of my thought') scarcely attract the self-searching, feeling-tossed mind of the poet of *Pauline*. He idealizes love but does not philosophize on it; the ideal is no *amor intellectualis dei* of the Dantesque variety, it is simply a spiritual power that holds out the hope of redemption to a soul which poignantly feels that it has been cut off from its moorings. Pauline represents, as it were, the other self of the poet-lover, the mind-self which dispassionately watches from the shores of calm understanding, the turbid eddies of feelings and ideals of the sentimental romantic self. The note which the poet attributes to Pauline shows that she represents this discerning, analytical, self-possessed faculty of the poet's mind co-existing with the blurred, unquiet aspirations.

The usual labels whereby poems are classified according to subject-matter cannot be applied to *Pauline*. It is a poem in which love, religion, joy in nature, romantic aspirations, worship of beauty and art, adoration of heroes, are all rolled into one. And this omnigenous character of the subject-matter

of the poem is entirely in the fitness of things. For *Pauline* is essentially the introspection of a much-grasping youthful mind. The poet experiences a number of things all at once, and would speak out his feelings and thoughts without pausing for any orderly arrangement of his theme. There is an irresistible urgency in his experience and in the desire for communicating it; sentiments, like waves, roll over sentiments, emotionalism clashes against ingenuous analysis. These are the 'growing pains' of adolescent art. 'What would I have?'— the poet asks himself, and the poem is the record of his attempt to standardize and stabilize the conflicting impulses that clamour within his mind. The words with which Browning pleaded for a truthful and sympathetic approach to the works of Shelley, are eminently applicable to *Pauline*:

> Nor will men persist in confounding, any more than God confounds, with genuine infidelity and an atheism of the heart, those passionate, impatient struggles of a boy towards distant truth and love, made in the dark, and ended by one sweep of the natural seas before the full moral sunrise could shine out on him. Crude convictions of boyhood, conveyed in imperfect and inapt forms of speech,—for such things all boys have been pardoned. There are growing pains, accompanied by temporary distortion, of the soul also. (*Essay on Shelley*, pp. 73-74)

An eloquent plea this. Browning speaks from his own experience of the parturient pains of the creative artist. No doubt, in the long run, it is the mature and finished work which levies a tribute of admiration from the student of literature, yet the 'passionate, impatient struggles of a boy towards distant truth and love', the 'crude convictions of boyhood, conveyed in imperfect and inapt forms of speech', elicit more than a 'pardon'. Our understanding of the mysterious nature of the poetic mind is partly aided by a study of the inchoate visions and tentative technique of a poet's early works. *Pauline*, therefore, takes its place of honour along with *Guilt and Sorrow*,

Queen Mab, *Endymion* and other early works of other poets as a symbol of the growing poetic mind. The additional interest of *Pauline* lies in the poet's conscious and almost unique endeavour to analyze these growing pains.

'GAUDY BUTTERFLIES'

—THE VERSE OF THE ENGLISH 'ANNUALS'

I

The credit of introducing the 'Annual' into the world of English letters rests with Rudolph Ackermann. The earliest of the English Annuals, the *Forget Me Not* for 1823, sponsored and financed by Ackermann and edited by Frederick Shoberl, appeared in November 1822. In 1824, the *Forget Me Not* found itself competing with two rivals and in 1825 with eight. The number of English Annuals, rising from nine in 1825 and 1826 to forty-three in 1830, fell to eleven in 1850, and after 1860, the species virtually died out.[1] As the dates of their rise, growth, and decay show, the Annuals were entirely a literary phenomenon of the Early Victorian period and a characteristic one. Reaching the acme of their popularity in the thirties, they suffered decline in the next decade. A number of these Annuals were very short-lived, some not appearing a second time. Some, like the *Angler's Souvenir* (1835, 1845, 1886) and *Baxter's Agricultural and Horticultural Annual* (1836), catered for tastes other than literary or artistic. Although the early English Annual was something more than its German or French prototype, it could yet lay no claim to literary merits, and the motive of the early sponsors was plainly and totally commercial. A shrewd man of business, Ackermann felt that there was a demand (at least, such a demand could be created) for elegant pocket-books, and he adapted the contents and make-up of his book to the prevailing taste of the buying class. The Advertisement to the first volume of the *Forget Me Not* reads:

The British public is here presented with the first attempt to

rival the numerous and elegant publications of the Continent, expressly designed to serve as tokens of remembrance, friendship, or affection, at that season of the year which ancient custom has particularly consecrated to the interchange of such memorials. The Publisher flatters himself that as well from the nature of the literary department in which it has been his aim to unite the agreeable with the useful, as from the execution of the graphic embellishments, this first volume of the FORGET-ME-NOT will be deemed not unworthy of the purpose for which it is intended.

The ingenuous Ackermann seems to have estimated that in this increasingly competitive undertaking, the only way to enhance the popularity of his work was to improve the quality equally of the literary and graphic contents. By 1826, the chapters on royal families, current history, and other sundry non-literary matter disappeared, and the English Annual commenced its quarter-of-a-century-long journey along the path of belles-lettres. The services of distinguished authors were enlisted simultaneously with the assistance of some of the best-known artists and engravers in the country. Once a plate was obtained, an author was employed to write an illustrative poem or story.[2] A rough estimate shows that nearly three-fourths of the writings were derivative in this fashion. The plates were sometimes disliked, the *Monthly Chronicle* (January 1839, p. 65) observing:

It will have struck any one, who has taken the trouble to bestow a thought on the matter, that the works of the greatest living artists are never seen in these Annuals. . . . They [the major artists] are in the habit of bestowing thought and labour on their designs and require to be paid for their works; whereas thought is a process that would be fatal to the production of an 'Annual' plate.

True, there is hardly a memorable instance in the Annuals of a first-rate illustration to a first-rate poem, nevertheless, these twofold representations of a poem may have increased

the average reader's capacity to appreciate the interrelation between the two arts by accustoming his sensibilities to glide easily from the appeal of a plate to that of the illustrative poem even though the appeal in either case might be crude and elaborately obvious.

None too pleased with these immensely popular rivals, the reviewers of literary magazines and weeklies called them 'those butterfly books', 'these agreeable toys of literature', 'the pestilent visitation of gilded flies . . . these little toy-books . . . the elegant litter of the drawing room . . . expanded into great gaudy butterflies . . . they have become a nuisance that calls for abatement . . . a heap of tawdry rubbish', 'a cargo of these glittering books', 'agreeable trifles', 'a gossamer kind of manufacture', and so on.[3] The severest detractor was the *Monthly Chronicle* which found fault with them for not only keeping the better class of books out of the market but also corrupting the taste of the readers.[4] When in the fifth decade of the century decay had set in among the Annuals, a reviewer sneeringly observed: 'The days for Annuals are nearly over, and the fashion has lasted a long time for a fashion.'[5]

II

Begotten with no literary ideal, the Annual was none the less remarkably successful in securing the assistance of notable men of letters.[6] Thus, to the *Keepsake* contributed Scott, Moore, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lockhart, Mary Shelley, FitzGerald, Alfred Tennyson, Bulwer, Landor, Marryatt, Dickens, Disraeli, Thackeray, Ruskin; to the *Forget Me Not* Hood, Campbell, James Montgomery, Bernard Barton, Mrs. Hemans, Miss Landon, Hogg, Bowles; the *Literary Souvenir* received contributions from the Tennyson brothers, Washington Irving, R. H. Horne, Miss Barrett, Ebenezer Elliott, Talfourd, Henry Taylor. Each Annual managed to have its share of celebrities,[7] it was seldom that a writer attached himself exclusively to a particular Annual.[8]

On the contributions of the famous poets of the elder generation, the *Athenaeum's* comment (1829, p. 658) was: 'Some of the effusions to which the most celebrated names are affixed, smell, it is true, a little mouldy, as if they had been drawn from a score-year-old portfolio.' Indeed, though the *Keepsake* (1829) would have been poorer without Shelley's 'Do you not hear the Aziola cry?' or Wordsworth's sonnet ' "Miserrimus!" and neither name nor date', or Southey's 'Turner, thy pencil brings to mind a day', or Coleridge's epigrams, such compositions were nevertheless misfits in miscellanies purporting to be records of current literature.[9]

III

Among the younger writers were poets like the Tennyson brothers, Monckton Milnes, FitzGerald, Miss Barrett, R. H. Horne, and Thomas Wade, but the typical Annual verse came rather from Charles Swain, William Kennedy, Thomas Kibble Hervey, Thomas Pringle, Thomas Miller, and Alaric Watts, men of some importance in the literary world of their day. The idea governing their compositions is that poetry speaks the language of the heart. Interpreting the legend of Numa and Egeria ('The Grotto of Egeria', *Literary Souvenir*, 1832), Hervey exclaims:

> Beautiful dreams!—that haunt the younger earth,
> In poet's pencil or in minstrel's song,—
>
> . . . .
>
> Oh no!—bright visions!—fables of the heart!
> Not to the past alone do ye belong,—
> Types for all ages,—wove when early art
> To feeling gave a voice,—to truth a tongue!

Alaric Watts, the title of whose book of verses *Lyrics of the Heart* is not without significance, insists on the same view of poetry in his lines (*Literary Souvenir*, 1832) on Cambpell:

> No! the Poet's a planet that's brightest apart—
> Let him revel at will in the world of the heart.

Art gives voice to feeling—that is the emphasis with these poets.[10] No wonder then that the depth and amplitude of the emotional experience of these writers being meagre, the emotional content of their verse should easily turn into frothy sentimentality of which a typical example can be

found in Hervey's 'Cleopatra at Actium' (*Literary Souvenir*, 1837):

And hers is still the spendthrift heart that, when a wayward girl,
In passion's hour, to pleasure's bowl cast in a priceless pearl;—
But oh! her wealth of hoarded gems were all too poor to pay
The one rich pearl, in the wild hour, her fears have flung away!—

Byron and Tom Moore at their feeblest are the models for these minor poets. Thus, William Kennedy would, like another Childe Harold, wander about in the world, away from untrustworthy humanity, wrapped up in his loneliness:

I've left behind men more unkind
 Than is the fitful blast, . .
My soul a pilgrim in the wilds,
 And way-worn longs for rest;
Life's troubled day doth need the stay
 Of an abiding breast.[11]

Compared to Kennedy's attitudinizing, Thomas Pringle's 'An Emigrant's Song' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1834) shows a refreshingly simple romanticism:

Oh, maid of the Tweed, wilt thou travel with me,
To the wilds of South Africa, far o'er the sea,
Where the blue mountains tow'r in the beautiful clime,
Hung round with huge forests, all hoary with time?

Pringle's earliest publications in 1816 had earned the praise of Scott whom he had imitated and continued to imitate as late as 1832.[12] His experiences, however, as a settler in South Africa between 1820 and 1826 lent a new and worthy colour to his poetry. In personal life Pringle was anything but a world-loser and world-forsaker; the occasional romantic escapism of the unembroidered verses of his 1834 volume, *African Sketches*, was the natural growth out of the unusual

circumstances in which the poems were written. Of the poem 'Afar in the Desert', Coleridge wrote:[13]

> For some days I did little else but read and recite your poem, now to this group and now to that . . . I do not hesitate to declare it among the two or three most perfect lyrics in our language.

The special appeal which this poem had for the erstwhile dreamer of a Pantisocratic community probably accounts for the extravagance of the praise. Pringle was a social worker—his work for the Anti-Slavery League brought on him the satire of Nahum Whistlecraft in *The Reform Ministry and the Reformed Parliament* (1834)—and a number of his poems deal with South African problems. His knowledge of the Negro's character lends an impressive veracity to such poems depicting the fiercer side of the people as 'The Fount of Uhlanga' and 'The Captive of Camalu', published in *Friendship's Offering* of 1834 and 1833 respectively. Tennyson's image of the hungry lion in 'Locksley Hall' is said to have been inspired by the following lines:[14]

'Tis the lion, gaunt with hunger,
  Glaring down the darkening glen;
But a fiercer Power and stronger
  Drives him back into the den.

Awareness of social evils, so manly in Pringle, degenerates into sentimentality in others. The contrast between the rich and the poor—a frequent theme in the verse of the second quarter of the century[15]—elicits the following lines ('The sale of the pet lamb of the cottage', *Literary Souvenir*, 1830) from Mary Howitt:

Oh! poverty is a weary thing, 'tis full of grief and pain,
It boweth down the heart of man, and dulls his cunning brain;
It maketh even the little child with heavy sighs complain!
The children of the rich men have not their bread to win;

They hardly know that labour is the penalty of sin;
Even as the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin.

Factory labour, especially child labour, is another favourite theme of Early Victorian poetry[16] and Annual verse has its share of interest in it. Thus in another poem of Mary Howitt, an old labourer breaking flint tells how he came to live on the parish, and a girl child working in the factory says:[17]

For oh, the factory is so hot,
And so doth daze my brain;
I just run here to breathe the air,
And then run back again. . . .
'And Tommy, who is he?' I asked.
'My brother', she replied.
'The factory wheels they broke his arms,
And sorely hurt his side.
He'll be a cripple all his days,
For him these flowers I got.'

The plight of convicts is T. K. Hervey's theme in 'The Convict Ship' (*Literary Souvenir*, 1825). We have two contrasted pictures of a ship on voyage, once when the morning surges seem to rejoice, and the other when the ship appears 'like an island of rest' on the calm waters of the sea at night. Hervey moralizes:

'Tis thus with our life, while it passes along,
Like a vessel at sea, amid sunshine and song!. . .
All gladness and glory to wandering eyes,
Yet chartered by sorrow, and freighted with sighs!

The misery of the emigrant, another social problem of the age,[18] attracts Agnes Strickland in 'The Young Cottagers' (*Forget Me Not*, 1837). Three cottage children whom she met first one bleak autumn day, and often afterwards, have now left England:

Stern want has rudely forced them,
With exiled hands to roam;
To seek in distant lands the bread
They could not find at home.

On another aspect of the contemporary social situation, pauperism, the speaker in 'A Winter's Picture' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1841) of Cornelius Webbe expresses himself in strong words worthy of Ebenezer Elliott :

Lift up thy rod, thou God of mercy,
And do thy Patriarch Prophet's part!
Strike out the waters of sweet pity
From that dry Horeb, Man's hard heart!
The Poor in this rich land are crying ;
No clouds rain manna now, nor quails ;
And who should feed them mete their mercies,
Weigh their deep miseries in scales!

Judging by these poems, whatever the exact nature of the social evils be, they all arise, in the last analysis, from a situation in which there is worsening poverty in the midst of rising national wealth.

IV

These treatments of vexed social questions notwithstanding, the statement of the *Monthly Chronicle* that 'thought is a process that would be fatal to the production of an "Annual" plate',[19] is equally applicable to Annual verse. In the poems that touch the fringe of social problems the emphasis is rather on feeling than thought, and the problems are made occasions for sentimental piety. Generally speaking, these poets eschew not only social and intellectual questions but pronounced passion as well. The morbidity of Ruskin's 'Christ Church, Oxford, *Night*' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1838), the poignant pathos of Charles Whitehead's sonnet 'As yonder lamp' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1835), and the intense passion of Calder Campbell's 'Woman's Grief' (*Forget Me Not*, 1836) are disturbing intruders in the company of staid Annual sentiments. As a rule, Annual poets steer clear of dark and turbulent passions. They write numerous verses on love, love of a kind that is never too strong for even the weakest and most correct palate:

> Tell not of love! it is a dream,
> It is indeed a dream!
> Tell not of love! it is indeed
> A sunlight on the stream!
> Tell not of love! it owns no God,
> No truth, no during might;
> Tell not of love! the child of change,
> Whose breath can bless and blight.[20]

The style of love lyrics in the Annuals is a mixture of Byron (of the *Hebrew Melodies*), Tom Moore, and Mrs Hemans,

the ready-made style of which the young poetical aspirants of the second quarter of the century found themselves the grateful inheritors. This love-poetry is of wedded love, intimately connected with praises of home life and homely things in general. Thus the lines below[21] convey a husband's sorrow of separation:

Linger not long!—Home is not home without thee;
Its dearest tokens only make me mourn.
Oh! let its memory like a chain about thee,
Gently compel, and hasten thy return.
Linger not long.

Naturally in this wedded love the child has his place. Fitz-Gerald's stanza (*Keepsake*, 1837) beseeches the wife to think of the absent husband when she caresses the baby:

Think of me, dear one! when you tend
The couch whereon our hope reposes,
Think of me, dear one! when you bend
Above her sleep, while evening closes.

Mrs. L. H. Sigourney's 'Victoria opening the Parliament of 1841' (*Forget Me Not*, 1843) eloquently presents this ideal of domesticity:

Fruitful in change
Had been the fleeting year. When last she stood
In this august assembly, to convoke
The power of Parliament, the crown adorn'd
A maiden brow: but now that vow had passed
Which death alone can break, and a new soul
Come forth to witness it. And by the seed
Of those most strong affections, dropp'd by Heaven
In a rich soil, I knew there was a germ
That fain would have disclosed itself in sound,
If unsuppressed. Through her transparent brow,
I could discern that word, close wrapp'd in love,
And dearer than all royal pageantry.

Thy *babe*, young Mother! Thy sweet, first-born babe!
That was the word.

A song in Charles Knight's story 'The Orphans' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1828), conveying the same feeling of domestic love, appears to be a remarkable forerunner of Tennyson's lullaby in *The Princess*:

Rest, rest, thou gentle sea,
Like a giant laid to sleep,—
Rest, rest, when day shall flee,
And the stars their bright watch keep;
For *his* boat is on thy wave,
And he still must toil and roam,
Till the flowing tide shall lave
Our dear and happy home.
Wake not, thou changeful sea,
Wake not in wrath and power,
Oh, bear his bark to me,
Ere the handsome midnight lower;
For the heart will heave a sigh,
When the loved one is on the deep,—
But when angry storms are nigh,
What can Mary do,—but weep?

This love of domestic sentiments led to several poems of the 'May Queen' type: 'The Dying Boy to the Sloe-Blossom' by Ebenezer Elliott (*Amulet*, 1835); 'The Child's Death Bed' by Edward W. Cox (*Friendship's Offering*, 1835); 'Ellen Gray' by Thomas Miller (*Friendship's Offering*, 1836); and Miss Jewsbury's 'The Dying Girl to her Mother' (*Amulet*, 1832) which was first published in the *Athenaeum* (1830, p. 677) and had thus preceded Tennyson's poem. Domestic virtues were so admired that when an unknown poet (G. W. L. in 'The Invitation', *Friendship's Offering*, 1840) besought his beloved to accompany him to a woodland retreat—the retreat theme was growing conventional during the Early

Victorian period—the images he employed to describe the attractions of the place were borrowed from domestic virtues:

> Pale, gentle flowers of modest dye,
> Like household virtues, coy, retiring,
> Unenvious of the world's admiring;
> But paying well the curious eye
> That bends observant of their worth,
> To call their timid beauties forth.

The prevalent taste for domesticity and sentimentality made English Idylls more popular than ever.[22] Tennyson's 'Dora', composed not later than 1835, owed its story to Miss Mitford's prose tale, 'The Rustic Wreath. A Village Story', published first in *Friendship's Offering* for 1828 and afterwards in the third volume of *Our Village* under a different title. Two of Thomas Miller's poems, 'The Desolate Hall' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1838) and 'Ellen Gray', show some genuine poetic sensibility; in particular, 'The Desolate Hall' suggests, in faint anticipation of Walter de la Mare's 'The Listeners', the eerie atmosphere of a dilapidated house, but Miller's proneness to heightened language, a reflex of his sentimentality, mars the total effect of his work.

V

The connecting link between the poems on domestic themes and the romantic verse-tales is provided by the ubiquitous sentimental attitude. The mighty impetus given to the poetic treatment of the exotic, the wild, and the mysterious by the writers of the preceding fifty years, continued in the Early Victorian period principally through the medium of the Annuals. The Annuals have verse-tales telling of 'The Doom of Cheynholm', 'The Lady of Ashlyn', 'The Tears of Psammenitus', and the like; prose tales of 'The Merchant of Cadiz', 'The Santa Trinidada', 'The Magyar and the Moslem'.[23] Whitehead's 'Ippolito: A Chimera in Rhyme' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1834) is a storehouse of crude romantic thrills dealing with necromancy, Venetian gondolas, incantations, a dead woman coming to life, and so forth, reminiscent of the Faust legend and suggesting finally that Virtue is best. T. K. Hervey's 'The Renegade's Daughter' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1840), written in the metre of Scott's verse-tales, gives the story of an Italian turned Moslem whose daughter, in the name of her dead mother, exhorts the renegade to re-embrace the old faith; the poem is eloquent with Christian ardour. A similar tendency to moralize makes the hero's speech in Kennedy's 'Timour's Death Bed' (*Literary Souvenir*, 1833) anachronic and long-winded. Ruskin's two verse-tales, 'The Scythian Guest' and 'The Broken Chain' (*Friendship's Offering*, 1840, 1840-3), testifying to his early love of the bizarre and the medieval, are free from moralizing. 'The Scythian Guest' draws upon the tradition found in Herodotus that when the head of the Scythian family died, his attendants placed the corpse

on a chariot and visited the houses of kinsmen each of whom gave a feast at which the dead body, made to sit at the head of the table, was served with the entire repast. Ruskin dwells fondly upon the description of the putrescent body at the table. In 'The Broken Chain', his longest and most sustained poem, Ruskin remembers not only the 'supernatural' magic of Coleridge but imitates as well that great poet's tricks of versification such as occasional trimeter and acephalous lines and hypermetric syllables. The story with its Knight, St. Cecilia's Shrine, the Abbess, the uncanny curse of the dying woman, the supernatural voice and shadow haunting the Knight and his lady, seeks but fails to produce an atmosphere of medieval enchantment. Images and descriptions evoke no medieval associations, the fable is too thin while the descriptions are too overloaded to bear a concentrated effect. The verse-tales of Annuals suffer from the worst weaknesses of romantic medievalism.

VI

On the literature of the Annuals, the influence of woman is writ large. Several Annuals were edited and run by women[24] and women contributed at least as many poems and stories as men did. But far more important than the quantity is the quality. The contributions of the ladies determined the basic key of Annual literature; men writers, whether established in fame or obscure, rarely strayed outside it. In the early years of Annuals Mrs. Hemans and Miss Landon were the shining lights; during the next two decades contributions from Mrs. Norton, Miss Jewsbury, Mary Howitt, Lady Emmeline Wortley, Agnes Strickland, Camilla Toulmin, Emma Roberts, and the Countess of Blessington[25] were much sought after by the publishers of Annuals. To some critics femininity appeared to be the pervasive quality of literature even outside the Annuals. One reviewer remarked, 'Our age, England's Victorian era, is peculiarly distinguished by the numerous and talented female writers of whom we can boast', and another held that 'the poetic genius of the age is far less virile than feminine...the genius of the age is, beyond doubt, for a display of the softer affections, a luxuriation in the gentler ecstasies, a brooding over home beatitudes, a dallying with and longing after the more delicate forms of thought.'[26] Likewise, J. R. Best, a forgotten satirist, attributed the prevalent sentimentality and domesticity of literature to the influence of woman:[27]

> And many a gentle authoress can prove
> This the true age of sentiment and love.
> Whilom the poet's harp was thought to be
> Too highly toned for minstrelsy;...

But now full many a gentle lady's page
Declares the softer feelings of the age.

To open any volume of the Annuals, particularly of *Friendship's Offering* and the *Literary Souvenir* which are usually of a higher literary standard than the others, is to be in the midst of compositions dominated by the same emphasis on peripheral sentiments, obvious morals, and a philosophy of life in which propriety of conduct is the cardinal element. We have to remember the social function of the Annual. It was a pretty, glittering book for use in drawing-rooms where parents and children and visitors—prim ladies, clergymen, and evangelical gentlemen—might sit together, read from the Annuals, and discuss their literary merits without the slightest embarrassment. The avowed aim of the publishers and the editors was to have the maiden sisters 'Taste and Delicacy' preside over their Annuals, to insist on 'the uniform tone of pure morality, and of generous and manly sentiment', to 'intermingle, with taste and discretion, the *utile cum dulci*'[28]—a concession to the poetics of contemporary utilitarianism. These aims were fulfilled with eminent success.

Not alone to the drawing-rooms of the fashionable upper middle class was the vogue of the Annual confined. The Annual was trying to cater for a demand for literary enjoyment and moral delectation in a new society that was growing up in Britain after the hectic days of the Napoleonic wars and the Regency. The reading public had extended to manufacturers, tradesmen, and Britons overseas, and the expectations of poetry of these classes differed from the poetic standards of those who had had the benefit of the classical education of the universities[29] and who regarded literary appreciation as more or less their close preserve. With the growing accentuation of social stratification, there grew up several classes of literary taste. A pseudonymous correspondent of the *Athenaeum* (1844, p. 270) asked:

> What good then has our poetry done...to our officers, soldiers, sailors, artisans, and all those whose spirit, energy, and skill, are the support of our independence and the cause of our greatness?

In another article (ibid., p. 358), this correspondent made a more assertive statement:

> We want something that the generality of men may read—the millions....Reading with us is our pleasure, our relief, and we must have such literature as will afford us this relief with a pleasurable excitement, without any great expense of thought. We prefer, indeed, to cry rather than to think, and fancy it does us more good after our hard day's work. We are not ashamed of doing so. But we are not a lachrymose set; no flower-weepers. We have too strong a sense of the ridiculous for that, which makes us, of course, somewhat fastidious in our authors.

The special function of the Annuals was precisely to provide this 'relief with a pleasurable excitement, without any great expense of thought'. The stuff of their poetry is feeling, feeling that never presumes to well up from disturbing depths of the soul. They are just what the 'generality of men may read—the millions'. As the *Athenaeum* writer says, the British people of the Early Victorian period were no lachrymose set, yet a touch of pathos sometimes, an occasional ocular moisture, did their hearts good. The several poems on the May Queen theme, others on the sufferings of the poor, served the welcome purpose of canalizing the readers' emotions. In its variety of themes no less than in the ground tone, Annual verse is characteristic of the times: the luxury of an egotistical *weltschmerz*, the miseries of the ploughman or the factory worker; sophistry or simplicity; romantic tales of the bygone or homely narratives of the English countryside. The names of heroes and heroines are sometimes delightfully exotic, Count Rudiger of Hengstemberg, Don Guzman d'Izguerdo, Altamont Lariski, Donna Maria d' Alfarache;

the names of women beloved of the poets may be Eulion, Leila, Florine, Dolorida. Pertinent to this craze for the exotic was the growling question put by Sandy Mackay to Alton Locke (*Alton Locke*, ch. viii): 'Are ye gaun to be like they puir aristocrat bodies, that wud suner hear an Italian dog howl, than an English nightingale sing, and winna harken to Mr John Thomas till he calls himself Giovanni Thomasino?' But this is also the period of the English Idyll, and the Florines and Doloridas have to stand beside the Marys and Alices. And finally, these poets fully share the contemporary enthusiasm for material progress:

How man subdues the world! The rocks and mountains,
The strong wild waves give way afore his command;...
Look! Would he chain the sea? the sea is chained!
Cast back and banished from the solid shore....
Would he link the world to world,—the East to West?
'Tis done,—accomplished! O'er the Atlantic's breast
His navies with their broad wings sweep along.[30]

VII

The decay of the Annuals marks the end of a characteristic feature of Early Victorian literature. They died partly because what with too many competitors in the field and the enormous increase in the cost of production, they did not long remain a commercially profitable proposition.[31] The slump in the book trade of 1842[32] was another likely factor in the decay; while the number of Annuals for the year 1832 is sixty-three, for the year 1842 it is only twenty-three. The unabated hostility of the periodicals might have persuaded the reading public, not incorrectly, of the low literary level of Annual literature. The abler writers either withdrew their patronage after a few contributions[33] or offered only indifferent productions, and the Annuals with their obliging host of conventional, imitative, fashionable versifiers were unable to meet the literary expectations of intelligent readers. Again, these yearly publications could not compete with the recently established monthly magazines.[34] But possibly the most important cause of the growing neglect of the Annuals was the fact that in the works of Tennyson and Dickens the reading public began to find a sublimated presentation of the chief and characteristic quality of Annual literature—sentimentality. At any rate, the Annuals had proved their usefulness before they died. They helped to propagate a taste for letters during the thirties when no fresh current seemed to flow in literature. To the modern reader they account for that peculiar strain in Victorian poetry which, with reference to Tennyson, has been called the 'school-miss' element. Indeed, in the Annuals, one hears the whole gamut of contemporary literature, its love

of pretty sentiments, its earnest morality, its growing consciousness of social unrest and yet its distaste for revolutionary procedure. The gamut is there but the expression is in a minor key.

'NEW MOULD'

—THE EARLY VICTORIAN VERSE-NOVEL

I

The two most notable contributions of Victorian poets to the form of poetry were the verse-novel and the dramatic monologue. In an age of complex and exciting variety of literary ideals, there was hardly any known form that the poets did not practise, hardly any form that did not respond to the aim and vision of one poet or another, but it was only in the verse-novel and the dramatic monologue that the spirit of innovation of the Victorian poets found happy expression. It is possible to trace the embryonic phases of these forms to earlier periods of English poetry, but the forms, as we know them today in their full, mature and multidimensional lineaments, were characteristic achievements of the Victorian period. Curiously, both these forms have been neglected by scholars so far. While on the dramatic monologue there are some intelligent *obiter dicta* by various critics and a full-length study,[1] there is no considerable discussion whatsoever of the verse-novel. The neglect of the verse-novel is difficult to account for seeing that poets like Tennyson and Browning, Elizabeth Barrett and Clough and Patmore, William Allingham and 'Owen Meredith' and James Thomson have employed this form for some of their most significant and enduring works. In the reassessment of Victorian literature which has been engaging the attention of scholars of late, the value of the verse-novel, so characteristic a form of the age, will have to be recognized.

The aim of the present essay is to study the early

phases of the Victorian verse-novel, phases during which the poets, in spite of unsure and halting steps, make undeniable progress towards a compact (as compact as it is possible for so flexible and amorphous a form as the novel to be) and poetically powerful form. It is always instructive and sometimes pleasurable to watch the early hesitant movements before they reach to a climax in *Aurora Leigh* (1857), perhaps the most enduring achievement of the Victorian verse-novel although it certainly does not exhaust the possibilities of the form.

II

What led the Victorians to the verse-novel? The answer to the question is tied up with their search for new poetic forms, a search that in its turn ensued from their concept of poetry. During the thirties of the century, there was a keen and widespread awareness of the necessity of attuning the nature and function of poetry to the new conditions and therefore to the new values and requirements of society. About 1835, G. S. Venables, a friend of Tennyson, wrote thus to the poet:

> The great Catholic painters could express what was at the same time ideal and real in the mind of the people: but the modern artist has hardly ever found similar objects of high imagination and intense popular feeling for his art to work upon. If, wrote Venables, in a contemporary letter to my father, an artist could now find out where these objects are, he would be *the* artist of modern times.
>
> (Hallam Tennyson, *Tennyson, A Memoir*, i, 123)

The demand here postulated, that for 'the artist of modern times', is voiced time and again in similar or different words in contemporary journals and magazines, letters and diaries and memoirs. To cite a handful of examples:

> Today has nothing in common with Yesterday......We will not allow an author to display his talents merely......we expect that he should have a purpose in this display, and that purpose one of tangible benefit.
>
> (*The New Monthly Magazine*, 1831, Pt. I, p. 437)

> [The poets] have brought on poetry itself the imputation of being frivolous and pernicious, of being essentially feudal, aristo-

cratic, warlike, and superstitious. But the revolution has reached even the La Vendee of literature. The muses cease from dreaming of the past to prophecy of the future.

(*The Monthly Repository*, August 1832, p. 537)

Any genuine poetry is welcome in the present day, when many are still persisting in the dream of acquiring Fame by epics of the *past* and names bearing no relation to actual society and living interest.

(*The Athenaeum*, 1843, p. 732)

The chief fault [of current poetry] is the want of subject and of matter—the absence of real persons, intelligible interests, and conceivable incidents, to which all this splendid apparatus of rhetoric and fancy may attach itself, and thus get a purpose and a meaning which it never can possess without them.

(*The Edinburgh Review*, Sept. 1828, p. 51)

The country in which these varieties of good and evil are found mixed on such a scale can hardly be considered in a state of lifeless inertness. Its [Of England of the times] want cannot be of themes and interest, but rather of those able to seize what lies before them, and turn it to right imaginative use.

(*The Quarterly Review*, Sept. 1842, p. 390; Sterling's review-article on Tennyson)

It is time for a POET once more to arise..... duly awakened, and befittingly inspired, how lofty is the position he may occupy!... The elements of the old world shaken—the mine latent beneath the throne of kings, and the worms busy at their purple......A poet, rapt in the spirit of this age, will command the next! What themes and what fame may be reserved for one whose mind can be thus slowly nurtured to great thoughts by great events!

(*The New Monthly Magazine*, 1833, Pt. I, p. 74)

Tory or Whig or Radical, these journals all believe that their age marks the climacteric of a civilization, that it must be the conscious aim of poetry to correspond to the new

values, that poetry can fulfil its high function by seeking new themes and new forms, and that the subject-matter of poetry has to be related to 'actual society and living interests'. Not all Victorians saw eye to eye with the Benthamists but Utilitarian presumptions are not distantly behind demands for purpose and meaning and tangible benefit in poetry. In preferring Today to Yesterday, the Early Victorians also implied their preference for contemporaneity in the subject-matter of poetry. The influential Carlyle was untiring in his plea for the contemporary theme.

> The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal World is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet precisely because he can discern it there.
>
> (*Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, i, Essay on Burns, p. 272)

> We recollect walking with Mr. Thomas Carlyle down Regent Street, when he remarked that we poets had all of us mistaken the argument that we should treat. 'The past,' he said, 'is all too old for this age of progress. Look at this throng of carriages, this multitude of men and horses, of women and children......If we should penetrate their minds and ascertain their motives, an epic poem would present itself......A poem, whether in verse or prose, conceived in this spirit, and impartially written, would be the epic of the age.'
>
> (*The Monthly Magazine*, July 1839, p. 36; editorial by J. A. Heraud)

Precisely such too is the argument advanced in a poem by Tennyson and another by Mrs. Browning:

> Why take the style of those heroic times?
> For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
> Nor we those times; and why should any man
> Remodel models rather than the life?
>
> (The prologue-piece called 'The Epic' to *Morte d'Arthur*, the text of the 1842 version)

I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hundred years,
Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-court.

(*Aurora Leigh*, V, 189-92)

Since the age was new and demanded a new school of poetry, poetry in which the subject-matter would have to be chosen from the fermenting life all around, it followed that there would be a dissatisfaction with old poetic forms and a search for new ones; the uniqueness of factual reality and the spiritual exhilaration on account of the new values could not be matched with moulds that had conformed to bygone values and facts. 'I am inclined to think', wrote Elizabeth Barrett to Robert Browning, 'that we want new *forms* as well as thoughts. The old gods are dethroned. Why should we go back to the antique moulds, classical moulds as they are so improperly called?'[2] Dissatisfaction with the old forms was expressed by others too. Thus, an anonymous reviewer wrote, 'A long drama, destined for the closet, not the stage, is not a popular form of poetry.'[3] Christopher North toyed with the idea of prose-poems but found hardly any praiseworthy specimen of the type.[4] Of satire, the *Athenaeum* wrote:

Satire....is out of date, no one regards versified satire now-a-days. The amenities of life seem to have superseded the severe though hearty manners of our ruder epochs. People like to enjoy themselves and others and satire puts them out of temper with the world and perhaps with their own hearts.

(*The Athenaeum*, 1843, p. 1133)

The epic too was considered an outmoded form: 'the age of epics, like that of chivalry, is past.'[5] Reviewing R. H. Horne's *Orion*, Elizabeth Barrett wrote:

If, in the apprehension of many, the Drama is dead, the Epopoeia

is buried ; and there is something ghastly in the stir of an epic poem.

(*The Athenaeum*, 1843, p. 583)

But though the epic was dead, it was sometimes thought that the form could be renovated and adapted to modern requirements:

> Psychological insight into motives and character—a bold interrogation of destiny—a graphic delineation of circumstance and disposition—
>
> Obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things—
>
> these are the attributes, with others still more difficult, that should distinguish the modern epic.

(*The Athenaeum*, 1847, p. 885)

The tremendous vogue of the novel and its suitability for delineating contemporary life, suggested the idea to some that a hybrid form, the verse-novel or the novel-poem, might be attempted. *The Athenaeum* appreciated the influence which poetry and the novel had recently exercised on each other:

> The novel had its birth in the most unpoetical of centuries. . [But poetical elements somehow crept in, e.g., in *Clarissa Harlowe*]... The rise of the Radcliffe race of novelists whose works, though at the farthest remove from good poetry, had enough of the semblance of poetry about them to deceive an age just emerged out of the darknesss of the previous century . . The Corsairs and the Giaours, the Marmions and the Ladies of the Lake, and the Lalla Rookhs, most of which possessed much original excellence... were a species of poetical novel in which incident, if not predominant over character, at least possessed a dangerous importance.
>
> The transition from poetry in which there was great infusion of novel-writing, to novels in which there was a great infusion of

poetry, was easy and natural; and hence arose Sir Walter Scott's novels.

(*The Atheneaum*, 1828, pp. 735-36, 'Mr. Colburn's List')

By including all manner of verse-tales in the novel-poem, the *Athenaeum* writer has given too blurred a connotation to the term which only shows that the scope and structural features of this yet not established form were conjectured rather than known. What the writers who practised the new form thought about its scope can best be gathered from their methods and from some of their occasional statements. In the preface to *Eva, a true story of light and darkness* (1842), Bulwer Lytton explains his wish to write 'a tale of modern character and life, conveyed in the language of modern times.' Referring to old poems which 'pleased our Norman and Saxon fathers,' Bulwer Lytton says :

Such poems take their interest from appeals to simple and domestic feelings in the course of a narrative characterized by the manners and habits of the time in which it was composed. Such poems are, in fact (what the 'Ill-Omened Marriage' aims at being) *Domestic Novels, in Verse*, rather than members of the larger class of *Romaunt* or *Ballad*. For a tale of this kind, adapted to our own age, a certain variety of style, that may often seem abrupt in its changes, is perhaps no less requisite in verse than in prose.

(Preface to *Eva, a true story* &c.)

This statement of Bulwer presents three important ideas, viz. that the verse-novel ('Domestic Novel in Verse' he calls it in contradistinction from the historical poem or the romantic) must have for its subject-matter the manners and habits of the time in which it is composed; secondly, that the traditional verse-narrative of this kind can be adapted to the Victorian age, and, thirdly, that in such a poem, there ought to be some variety of style. Bulwer's success as a

practitioner of this form is not remarkable but his understanding of the nature of the form is acute.

In his review of Alexander Smith's *Life Drama*, A. H. Clough—a perceptive critic—considers the relationship between poetry and the novel and a possible admixture between them:

> There is no question, it is plain and patent enough, that people much prefer 'Vanity Fair' and 'Bleak House.' Why so ? Is it simply because we have grown prudent and prosaic. . . . Or is it, that to be widely popular, to gain the ear of multitudes, to shake the hearts of men, poetry should deal, more than at present it usually does, with general wants, ordinary feelings, the obvious rather than the rare facts of human nature ? Could it not attempt to convert into beauty and thankfulness, or at least into some form and shape, some feeling, at any rate, of content—the actual, palpable things with which our everyday life is concerned ? . . . .
>
> The modern novel is preferred to the modern poem, because we do here feel an attempt to include these indispensable latest addenda. . . . those positive matters of fact, which people, who are not verse-writers, are obliged to have to do with. . . . The novelist does try to build us a real house to be lived in. . While the poets, like the architects, are—a good thing enough in its way—studying ancient art, comparing, thinking, theorising, the common novelist tells a plain tale, often trivial enough, about this, that and the other, and obtains one reading at any rate; is thrown away indeed tomorrow, but is devoured today.
>
> (*The Poems and Prose Remains of A. H. Clough*, i, pp. 360-62)

Here in these words of Clough, we have a notable attempt to explain why the novel had grown more popular than poetry; its concern with 'general wants, ordinary feelings, the obvious rather than the rare facts of human nature' gave the novel an undoubted advantage over poetry. That concern, again, was a sign of the times. As the extracts quoted above from Early

Victorian journals indicate, the age was deeply conscious of its consolidating democracy and expected all the arts purposefully to advance the cause of democracy. The view that poetry should be for the millions rather than for the few—as the novel already was—found a champion in a writer calling himself 'Beta' in a journalistic controversy that was waged in the columns of the *Athenaeum*:

> With all the genius too, of our poets, why do they not attempt to refine society, and improve it....why do they not attempt a more direct and impulsive influence upon the *mass*, to whom their names even are scarcely known? What good then has our poetry done to our officers, soldiers, sailors, artisans?
>
> (*The Athenaeum*, 1844, 23 March, pp. 270-71)
>
> We want something that the generality of men may read—the millions; those engaged in the active scenes of life....Reading with us is our pleasure, our relief, and we must have such literature as will afford us this relief with a pleasurable excitement without any great expense of thought.
>
> (*The Athenaeum*, 1844, 20 April, pp. 357-58)

Not very remotely related to this demand for poetry for the millions is Clough's suggestion that poetry should learn from the novel by dealing with 'positive matters of fact' — 'the novelist does try to build us a real house to be lived in.' It would also seem that Clough does not apprehend any deterioration of the poetic quality of the proposed modern poetry provided it converts 'obviousness' into beauty and thankfulness. A new hope for poetry, in Clough's vision, lies in poetry's coming to terms with the novel.

The most constant thinker among the Victorians on these problems was Elizabeth Barrett. Her cogitations are spread over her letters—and there was none more voluminous a correspondent than this invalid lady in that age of tireless writers —but her most significant views are to be found in her corres-

pondence with Robert Browning and in her work, *Aurora Leigh*. She wants 'new *forms* as well as thoughts' as her letter quoted above shows. She believes in the age to which she belongs and is indeed thrilled by its infinite prospects; she has no patience with poets who are not equally stirred but allow their fancies to drift back to the legendary past:

> The critics say that epics have died out
> With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed gods ;
> I'll not believe it. . . . . . .
> .. ..
> All actual heroes are essential men,
> And all men possible heroes. . . . . . .
> .. ..
> Ay, but every age
> Appears to souls who live in't (ask Carlyle)
> Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours :
> .. ..
> I do distrust the poet who discerns
> No character or glory in his times.
> .. ..
>
> (*Aurora Leigh*, V, 139-190)

Elsewhere, she says:

> Let us all aspire rather to *Life*, and let the dead bury their dead. . . . For there is poetry *everywhere* ; the 'treasure' (see the old fable) lies all over the field.
>
> (*Browning Love Letters*,i, p. 46)

The idea of a new poetical form, something that would permit her to portray her own age without detriment to poetry, germinated in her mind over a long period and finally took living form and shape in *Aurora Leigh*, published in 1856. Her earliest recorded statement on the subject is in a letter to John Kenyon in 1844:

I have a great fancy for writing some day a longer poem of a like class [like 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship']—a poem comprehending the aspect and manners of modern life, and flinching at nothing of the conventional. I think it might be done with good effect. You once said that Tennyson had done it in 'Locksley Hall,' and I half agreed with you. But looking at 'Locksley Hall' again, I find that not much has been done in that *way*, noble and passionate and *full* as the poem is in other ways. But there is no story, no *manners*, no modern allusion, except in the grand general adjuration to the 'Mother-age', and no approach to the treatment of a conventionality. But Crabbe, as you say, has done it, and Campbell in his 'Theodoric' in a few touches was near to do it; but *Hayley* clearly apprehends the species of poem in his 'Triumphs of Temper' and 'Triumphs of Music', and so did Miss Seward, who called it the '*poetical novel*'. Now I do think that a true poetical novel—modern, and on the level of the manners of the day—might be as good a poem as any other, and much more popular besides.

(*Letters of E. B. B*, i, p. 204)

Here too, we have insistence on the contemporaneity of subject-matter, the possible popularity of the new form, the undimmed poetical value of the verse. The next recorded mention of her plan is in a letter to Robert Browning, dated 27 February, 1845:

My *chief* intention just now is the writing of a sort of novel-poem—a poem as completely modern as 'Geraldine's Courtship', running into the midst of our conventions, and rushing into drawing-rooms and the like, 'where angels fear to tread'; and so, meeting face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age, and speaking the truth as I conceive of it out plainly. That is my intention. It is not mature enough yet to be called a plan. I am waiting for a story, and I won't take one, because I want to make one, and I like to make my own stories, because then I can take liberties with them in the treatment.

(*Browning Love Letters*, i, p. 32)

She waited ten years for the story but meanwhile the plan thrilled Robert too who wrote in his ardent prose:

The poem you propose to make for the times; the fearless fresh living work you describe, is the *only* Poem to be undertaken now by you or anyone that *is* a Poet at all; the only reality, only effective piece of service to be rendered to God and man; it is what I have been all my life intending to do, and now shall be much, much, nearer doing since you will be along with me.

(Ibid. i, 38)

III

The Victorians then were led to the verse-novel by their faith in the inspiring age of Progress in which they lived and in the purposive (and almost Benthamist) view of poetry that they held; their conviction that the form of poetry must correspond to its aim and spiritual content; their assertion that the old forms of poetry were inadequate for its new content, and their argument that since both poetry and the novel had to meet the same requirements of a democratic age and the novel fulfilled its function competently (earning popular approval in the process) by 'meeting face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age,' it was worth while to apply the structure and technique of the novel to poetry too. The distinguishing mark of the verse-novel as Bulwer Lytton, Mrs. Browning and Clough and many others understand it, is the 'modernity' of the story; it must be 'a poem comprehending the aspect and manners of modern life.' Now the composition of verse-tales of contemporary life and manners was no unprecedented feature of Early Victorian poetry. To go not far back in the history of English poetry, we have in Crabbe's works remarkable verse-tales of contemporary life, and Mrs. Browning refers—not quite accurately—to the works of Crabbe, Campbell, Hayley and Miss Seward as being forerunners of the type she intends to practise. But as we read even the early tentative verse-novels of the Early Victorian period and as we presently pass on to the confident and sometimes admirable specimens, we find that the new writers approach a contemporary story from an angle much different from the angle of Crabbe and certainly from the angles of Campbell and Miss Seward and others. Our Victorians must endow their tales with a thesis; they must charge contemporary facts with some meaning, finding in the

facts 'objects of high imagination and intense popular feeling', as Venables had written to Tennyson. The same didactic and purposive spirit works behind the prose novel and the verse-novel of the Early Victorian period. Writers who had no fancy for allegorical presentations of what they believed to be the fundamental principles and values of modern life—allegorical presentations such as may be found in Philip James Bailey's *Festus* and R. H. Horne's *Orion*—nor for satirical commentary in general on the thin pretext of some story—such as had been popularized by *Don Juan*[6]—but who considered the life of their times sufficiently important for aesthetic purposes, had recourse to earnest verse-narratives of their times. Some of the most praiseworthy examples of the *genre* are to be found in the later decades of the century but during the Early Victorian period, during the decades approaching the middle of the century and immediately following it, there are a number of interesting experiments in the direction of the *genre* and a few (including *Aurora Leigh*) memorable achievements.

IV

In Early Victorian poetry, tentative moves in the direction of the verse-novel can be noticed in several poems of moderate length dealing with rural life: Samuel Mullen's 'The Cottager's Sabbath', Catherine Grace Godwin's 'A tragedy in rural life', the episode of 'The Poor Law Martyr' in William Dearden's *The Vale of Caldene*, the story of Enoch Wray in Ebenezer Elliott's *The Village Patriarch*, John O'Neill's *The Drunkard*, an anonymous author's *The Deserter*, John Sterling's 'The Sexton's Daughter', Anna Harriet Drury's *Annesley*, and Mrs. Ellis's *The Sons of the Soil.*[7] Of these, only the last three works deserve some attention today. 'The Sexton's Daughter,' occurring in Sterling's *Poems*, tells the story of a pair of village lovers, Jane the daughter of the sexton and Henry the young schoolmaster. The sexton asks them to defer marriage till the next winter but before winter sets in, Henry dies and Jane, worn down by grief, follows him in a short time. That Sterling himself set some store by this poem comes out in one of his letters[8]:

> I have made time to write a good many verses, especially most of a poem, which, I suppose will run to more than 1500 lines, and which I call the Sexton's Daughter. It is an English village tale, and pleases me more than most of my attempts, because it is a step away from visions and allegories, such as I am naturally most inclined to.
>
> (*Sterling's Essays and Tales*, with a Life by J. C. Hare, I, p. xci)

A step away from visions and allegories—that is a significant phrase. Like many of his contemporaries, Sterling (not a competent poet but one of the most sensitive spirits of the age, as

those know who have read Carlyle's biography of him) considered it important for poetry to move away from romantic fancy towards everyday reality. This experiment in a new kind of poetry was found by the *Quarterly Review* to show

> the author master of that rare talent among poets, even of much higher general powers, of relating the necessary facts in verse, without discontinuance of the poetic tone and impulse; a faculty in which Shelley—to mention only one superior name—was so signally deficient.
>
> (*Quarterly Review*, June 1840, p. 157)

The reviewer, like the poet, was aware of a new demand on poetry, the demand for the narration of contemporary facts in verse which, as we have seen, had served as a germinating soil for the verse-novel. This was an intelligent awareness but if this review be not an example of a total lack of literary appreciation, it must be an instance of blatant puffing. There is scanty evidence of poetic power in 'The Sexton's Daughter'. A slender story is stretched almost to the breaking-point nor is there any insight into the problem of social and personal relationships that might lend a secondary interest to the story. The only virtue of this experiment in a verse-tale of contemporary life is that it provided Sterling with some necessary experience to write his next and more considerable work, *The Election*, not a negligible specimen of the verse-novel.

Anna Harriet Drury's *Annesley* tells the following story:

> Annesley, the vicar of a parish, who has reformed the moral habits of his flock and has earned their esteem, is stricken by the news that his only sister has eloped with an unworthy man. He fails in his attempt to search out the truants and returns to the parish broken in health and spirit. Lilian, an orphan girl who secretly loves him comes to learn that he loves another when he is dangerously injured while rescuing her from a ruffian. Lilian submits to a 'marriage of convenience' and soon dies. Annesley too is dead in a short while.

The narration is dilatory, the story being told by a parishioner to an old school-mate of Annesley; there is nothing distinctively 'modern' in the central situation of the story, that of unrequited love. The authoress has missed the only opportunity of making the story interesting which was to have developed the relations between Annesley and Lilian. Notable among the Early Victorian attempts to write verse-novels is *The Sons of the Soil* of Sarah Stickney (Mrs. Ellis) which in twelve books of rhyming pentameter tells the following story of the vicissitudes in the life of a farmer:

William Herbert, a frugal farmer, has a son Henry and three daughters, Martha, Lucy and Helen. After the death of Mary, Herbert's wife, her sister Matilda comes to live with the family to take charge of the children. The high price of corn during the Napoleonic wars makes Herbert prosperous. Matilda now persuades him to send his daughters to a fashionable school for young ladies, to dismantle his old house and to build a fashionable one. They now emerge as a gentleman's family and even Lord William Douglas, the landlord, pays them a visit. The eldest daughter Martha and the son Henry, not quite spoilt by fashion and social ambition, marry into a tradesman's family while Helen who foolishly expects Lord William to marry her is soon disillusioned. Lucy is courted by the curate, Eustace, who however breaks off on hearing that Herbert is now a ruined man. Lucy dies of heartbreak. Herbert with his son and daughter-in-law is compelled to emigrate.

Several *motifs* of early nineteenth century fiction have been introduced in the poem: social ambition, eduction of girls in fashionable schools, an upper-class philanderer, agrarian depression, emigration. This narrative of the unexciting tenor of a farmer's life is made more unattractive still by the author's prolix moralizing, yet an abundance of incidents well-organized into a neat structure, some creditable characterization and effective interplay of motives, and judicious emphases on

some social questions make *The Sons of the Soil* a verse-novel not without merit.

With these early specimens of the verse-novel are linked several other works which, by reason of their treatment of certain aspects of social life, are related to the verse-novel proper much as the short story is related to the prose novel. The recurring theme of these poems is the faithlessness of man in sex relationship.

'A Destiny' by Mrs. Norton[9] tells the story of a woman who after marrying the man she loves, finds him vulgar, a profligate and a cheat. Her love turns into scorn and she has bitter apprehensions that her sons may take after the father. Mrs. Norton tells her story in a direct manner and skilfully presents the gradual changes in the wife's sentiments and the contrast between the husband and the wife. Since the author's emphasis is on sentiments rather than on character, blank verse and the technique of the monologue might have suited her purpose better. Charlotte Brontë's 'Gilbert' concentrates on the emotions of a faithless lover the projections of whose guilty conscience and memory are given a supernatural and sensational turn. The romantic treatment of the story is in tune with Charlotte's Angrian poems and, in spite of contemporary setting, has a not far-fetched connexion with the romantic verse-tales of Charles Whitehead and Ruskin in the Annuals of the period. Another story of the effects of a husband's faithlessness on the wife's mind occurs in Julia Day's 'The Rescue'.[10] Mrs Boddington, an able minor poet, deals in 'Mary Graeme'[11] with the old theme of a seduced country girl but more interesting are her short verse-tales of faithful women in love betrayed by men and of social barriers between lovers.

William Bell Scott's 'Rosabell', Coventry Patmore's 'The Woodman's Daughter' and W.C. Bennett's 'Sketches from a Painter's Studio' deal with the same theme—a simple country girl seduced by a high-born young man. Of these, 'Rosabell'[12]

is the most notable work. Here is the story of a young and pretty village girl living happily with her parents and loved by a lad, Andrew. She is sent to town to live with a sempstress as an apprentice and, within a year, grows sophisticated and corrupt. Her lover (called Lizard in the first version of the poem and Archer in later versions) presently transfers her to a friend of his. For some years, Rosabell lives in luxury, always as somebody's mistress, but her good days are soon over and she becomes a common street-walker, treated roughly by the hag in whose house she is a tenant, until she dies in a hospital. The poem is divided into fourteen sections which showRosabell at different ages, beginning at eight, then running almost continuously from her fifteenth year to the twenty-seventh; the final section is entitled 'Age, unknown'.[13] There are songs in between the sections. Discarding the method of straight narration, Bell Scott proves himself a pioneer in the employment of the cinematographic technique (long before the cinema was invented) of presenting a succession of pictures. A gifted painter, who was a poet too, he conceived of the story as a series of pictures unified by the recurring figure of the woman. The dramatic and realistic effect of this technique has been accentuated further by a flexible style that corresponds to the varying emotional tone from section to section. A dreary evening at the village home of Rosabell's father is described thus:

> The chill of eve is stayed from closing yet
> By the rosy and golden streaks
> Still lingering 'gainst the leaden dusk ;
> Like a thoughtless eye that sleep
> Slowly closes by degrees.
>
> (Section IX)

The colour-epithets betoken Bell Scott's Pre-Raphaelitism but the easy flow of descriptive poetry here contrasts with the colloquial realism of the following lines:

'The bath is pleasant, Rosabell,
Take an ice ?' 'Oh, thank you—thanks,
'It is an awkward scarf indeed,
Though from the heaven of Cashmere ;
It so destroys the hips.'

(Section VIII)

And both passages are in contrast with the lyric of a later section:

Water, water, wall-flower,
Growing up so high,
We are all maidens,
We must all die.
In especial Mary Anna,
She is the whitest flower ;
She can skip and she can sing,
Like the breezes in their bower.

(Section XIV, i)

An admirable economy of expression adds to the rapidity with which the story moves. Lizard, Rosabell's first patron, soon tires of her and agrees to pass her on to his friend Thorn; this information is conveyed in the following conversation:

'Oh, she is perfect grace, refined,
Yet marvellously fresh ;
More wine, dear Thorn ?—'Yes yes, more wine.'
'You must meet her.'—'And must love'—
'Well, no matter !'— 'Be it so !'

(Section VIII)

Bell Scott builds his poetry all through on how the characters react emotionally to the situations rather than on the situations themselves and thus seems to strengthen Coventry Patmore's belief that the new poetry of the age must be psychological:

Patmore....looks on the present race of poets as highly 'self-conscious' in comparison with their predecessors, but yet not

sufficiently so for the only system now possible is the psychological.

(Basil Champneys. *Memoirs & Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, i, 91; Champneys quotes from *Pre-Raphaelite Diaries & Letters*, 232)

With all this emphasis on psychology, however, the Painter's imagination of Bell Scott enables him so admirably to keep a firm grip on both situation and character that one wonders how this poem, praised by D. G. Rossetti whose picture *Found* was based on it,[14] has come to be forgotten.

The story of W. C. Bennett's 'Sketches from a Painter's Studio'[15] is that of a miller's daughter who is seduced by a profligate aristocrat, turns into a prostitute, and eventually drowns herself in the Thames. As the title of the poem indicates, the story is told not by the method of continuous narration but, as it were, by a series of pictorial compositions, each stanza standing for a picture, while the links between the stanzas are left to be construed by the reader's cooperative imagination. There is no evidence that Bennet was influenced by Bell Scott's poem, but the resemblance between their poems in respect equally of theme and technique is certainly striking.

In 'The Woodman's Daughter'—one of the three verse-tales in his 1844 volume of *Poems*—Coventry Patmore tells the story of Maud, the daughter of Gerald the Woodman, and Merton, the squire's son. A baby is born to Maud out of wedlock, she drowns the baby in the woodland stream, and, after Gerald's death, lives alone like a spectral figure in 'Gerald's Cottage'. A reviewer in the *Athenaeum* charged the poem with indelicacy:

The poet has shirked the most difficult passages by substituting asterisks for description. This fastidiousness makes the poem indelicate. (*Athenaeum*, 1844, p. 728)

And Patmore himself described[16] the poem as 'of doubtful morality'. The morality is indeed doubtful not because the story

is one of seduction and child-murder, but because after having chosen his story, the poet betrayed squeamishness in the treatment of it. Leaving aside this half-heartedness in regard to the theme, we can find in the rest of the poem an integration between human emotion and natural setting that is a characteristic of Patmore's mature manner. A similar theme receives a more ambitious and sustained treatment in another poem of Patmore's, 'Lilian, A Poem for 1844'. Constructed like a novel in miniature—with a Prologue, the Tale, and an Epilogue, that sharply demarcate the story into a beginning, a middle, and an end—the poem is based on a simple action. Percy, eighteen and Lilian, twenty, love each other. Into their quiet paradise, enters Winton, a blasé young man, experienced in French manners and French fiction. The up-to-date quality which the poet aimed at claiming for his poem, as is clearly indicated by the date in the title 'A Poem for. 1844', consists merely in this reference to French fiction which seems to have become popular in mid-Victorian British parlours. Winton' who is used to 'Too curious contemplation of the sole Medusa, Sin', poses to be Percy's good friend but corrupts Lilian by making her an addict to French novels. To his dismay, Percy learns that Lilian has transferred her love to Winton. Although there is some skill in the delineation of the psychological change coming over Lilian and Percy's gradual realization of his loss, the story of the poem is too thin while the studies in character fail to be impressive on account of the excessive emphasis—a deviation from the poet's main track—on the very trivial contemporary theme of the corrupting influence of French fiction. Percy's denunciation in the Epilogue of modern fashions and his expression of faith in Progress and England's destiny—familiar themes of Early Victorian literature—recall 'Locksley Hall' and remind us of the many contemporary reviews that noted Tennyson's influence on the early Patmore. Some of these elements of brand-new contemporaneity

Patmore shed off from the radically revised version of the poem that appeared afterwards in the *Tamerton Church-Tower* volume under the title 'The Yew-Berry'.[17] In this new version, the essential situation remains unaltered but the names are changed and, what is more important, the attribution of evil to French novels is eliminated. In course of time, Patmore outgrew the concept of love and life embedded in these early verse tales but the mature technique of the verse-novel that is writ large on *The Angel in the House* and *The Victories of Love* descends clearly from the hesitant technique of these early poems.

We may now consider about a dozen works which by virtue of their length, scope, theme and technique may properly be called verse-novels. Capel Lofft's *Ernest* (1839) is a poem in twelve books of more than 10,000 lines, mostly in blank verse of which the flexibility and nervous strength might have been better recognized by English prosodists had the circumstances of its publication been normal.[18] Full of exciting incidents and a crowd of characters, the story may be summarized thus:

Hermann, known as the son of a peasant, is a Dissenting preacher who loves Lucy, the daugher of Frederick Hess. Hess, an erst-while farmer, cherishes for good reasons a burning grudge against the prevailing social order, and is the central figure among a group of revolutionaries. Hermann joins the rebels in order to be able to marry Lucy who however loves Linsingen, the descendant of an ancient family but now an enthusiastic though somewhat impoverished rebel. News reaches the rebels that Hermann's father has betrayed them to the magistrate. Hermann who has had the mortification of finding that Lucy has accepted Linsingen, is suspected for a while but his sincere work leaves his leadership unchallenged. A clash between the rebels and government troops takes place at Markstein (the poet clearly has Peterloo in mind) ; the rebels win. Meanwhile, Linsingen has been taken a prisoner and Lucy, attempting to rescue him, is captured. A scuffle follows in which Linsingen, Lucy and Hess are killed.

Hermann and his men win the final victory and before Hermann can be elected king, he disappears rather mysteriously. It comes presently to be known that Hermann was a foundling, his real name is Ernest, and that his birth, life and disappearance are of the same mystical pattern as King Arthur's.

That Capel Lofft is not a good story-teller appears from his handling of the main action of the poem—the struggle between the rebels and the government—which does not properly begin till the end of Book VI. The earlier books are devoted to a long-winded exposition of the context and to the interrelation between the chief characters. The packing of more than three-quarters of the action within the last three books, while heightening our sense of the rapid course of action, leaves the sequence of events not a little confused. Several incidents come as a surprise to the reader: for example, Linsingen's unattended sally one morning during the troubles, ending in his capture, is insufficiently motivated. Lucy's plot to rescue Linsingen reads like a nursery tale; the coincidence on account of which Hermann and his men just fail to save their friends from death is unconvincing. Lofft uses the same Miltonic style equally for philosophical cogitations, narrations of events, public speeches, and quiet chats. In spite of all these faults most of which can be overlooked in a youthful first work (and that on the grand scale), *Ernest* is as important a political novel as Disraeli's *Sybil* and was recognized as such by some contemporary reviewers.[19]

The camouflage of German names for places and persons fails to conceal references to the political and social conditions of England during the thirties and *Ernest* is beyond doubt one of the most notable specimens of the Early Victorian verse of social ferment. A passionate conviction about the justice of the Chartist cause makes the narration lively and the love-element, in a triangular knot, further enlivens a story of insurrection, conspiracy and battle. Lofft both describes his characters

and shows them in action, and in this verse-novel, all the major characters, Hess, Hermann, Lucy and Linsingen, stand out in clear-cut individuality. The sketches of some of the minor characters, such as Lucy's mother, the revolutionary speakers in Book IX, the aristocrats in Book XII, are vividly and feelingly drawn. The strength of *Ernest* as a verse-novel lies in characterization and the choice of the theme rather than in plot-construction although even in this last respect, the novel's achievement is not altogether mean. Never losing his firm grip on the contemporary socio-economic situation and the gathering storm of a class-struggle, with a remarkable gift for creating an atmosphere of actuality around his descriptions, Capel Lofft has enriched his novel with the romantic story of a political revolution that aligns itself vaguely also to the medieval legend of King Arthur.

The next work in date is Sterling's *The Election*, published anonymously in 1841, and here too the setting is contemporary. The story goes thus:

When Cox M. P. of Aleborough dies, the Tories set up Mogg as their candidate while the Whigs, having no suitable candidate of their own, accept Francis Vane, a stranger. Vane puts up with the lawyer Spark who does not know that his niece Ann and Francis already know and love each other. The election campaign goes on. Meanwhile, Lady Diana Spence, a rich client of Spark, tells him that her son Fitzurse-Fitzalbot has taken a fancy to Ann and that therefore it would be advisable to remove her from the town. The removal is arranged but Francis, scenting the matter, contrives to accompany the young lady. Lady Diana's son is found actually to have eloped with a barmaid. On the day of the election, Francis is absent and Mogg has an easy win. A rowdy group of people raid the unpopular Spark's office and discover that the uncle has cheated the niece of her property. The narrative ends with the marriage of Francis and Ann.

It is a feeble plot but the background of contemporary political

life, including a reference to Prince Albert, lends a semblance of actuality to the story in spite of such an improbable suggestion that the Whigs (or, for that matter, the Tories) should accept a complete stranger as their candidate, and such a puerile device as Francis Vane's accompanying Ann in the disguise of a maid. Sterling gives some evidence of inventiveness in a number of incidents but fails to organize them into a balanced plot. The style has a conversational flow in accord with the spirit of the story; some characters (particularly those of Spark, Lady Diana and Mogg) are drawn with some skill. Sterling is obviously more interested in manners than in emotions and ideas but it is difficult to see why he sought to present his portrayal of the times in verse form. The work is singularly lacking in poetical quality and although there are some sharp and shrewd comments on political and social chicanery, the *Election* is a poor specimen of the verse-novel of which the only notable feature is its choice of an aspect of contemporary life for its theme.

Bulwer-Lytton's first attempt in the direction of the verse-novel was in *The Siamese Twins. A Tale of the Times* (1831), a fantastic verse-tale of Ching and Chang who are brought over to England and made to go through strange adventures. Devoid of any plot, character-interest or intellectual content, this work is a protracted fanfaronade of pseudo-Byronic comments on men and manners; the only kinship of the work with the verse-novel is in its protuberant contemporaneity. 'The Ill-Omened Marriage' (1842) is a much better specimen of the verse-novel.

Lord Ruthven, disillusioned of the world, lives a quiet life in his ancestral castle by the Avon. Seaton, once a merchant prince of London but now a ruined man, lives with his daughter Constance on the opposite bank of the river. Ruthven and Constance meet; he loves her, and by saving Seaton from creditors, so much earns the gratitude of father and daughter that a marriage is arranged.

In the days before their financial distress, Constance loved Harcourt, a good-looking careerist who had managed to withdraw as soon as he had foreseen Seaton's ruin. Now on Seaton's recovery, he reappears. From a talk that Lord Ruthven overhears on their bridal day, he understands that Constance is still in love with Harcourt. Deeply shocked, he arranges that he and his wife should live in separate apartments.

Harcourt is next of kin to Ruthven. He frequently visits the castle with a view to corrupting Constance but by now she has realized her husband's superiority to her former lover. After an incident which has the appearance of a clandestine meeting between Constance and Harcourt, husband and wife are reconciled to each other; in a year's time, the noble lord has an heir.

Abundance and complexity of incidents in the poem testify to the hand of a practised novelist. There is no central emotional theme nor any reading of contemporary life. The principal emotional scene is that of reconciliation between Ruthven and Constance, but the numerous incidents prelusive to it obscure its dramatic effect. Bulwer employs several devices of the comedy of manners: an amatory tangle involving two men and one woman; sharp contrast between the two men; intrigues, whisperings and eavesdroppings. The melodramatic nature of the plot is further accentuated by the fact that on three crucial occasions during the course of the story, overhearing is brought to play. No character comes out well with the exception of Harcourt, the fickle lover. The end of the story shows that with all his professions of *tedium vitae*, Bulwer rather fancied a sentimental dénouement. Bulwer calls this work a 'domestic novel, in verse'. In eschewing historical stories, romantic legends, supernatural incidents (which crowd the pages of contemporary Annuals) and the fiction of roguery (the novel of sensation and the crime-novel flourished at this time) for a straightforward tale of love's vicissitudes in a contemporary setting, Bulwer has justified the appellation, and

The Ill-Omened Marriage, published in 1842, is a forerunner of his later 'Varieties in English Life' such as *The Caxtons* and *My Novel*.

With a plot that is too slender for a novel, Sir Francis Hastings Doyle's *The Two Destinies*(1844)should rather be called a short story in verse. The poem presents the contrasted destinies of two girls, Ellen Gray, born of poor parents, and Edith Vere, daughter of Lord Vere of Wyndcliffe Hall. By the time Edith Vere is happily and suitably married, Ellen Gray rests in her grave after a short miserable career of prostitution enforced upon her by her father's death and her mother's protracted illness. The value of the poem as a comment on current social problems need not be discussed here but the simplicity of Doyle's story-telling makes his thesis impressive and he is justified in his claim advanced in the Preface that 'the events introduced into it have no other value than that of affording an opportunity to represent successive states of feeling, and modifications of character.' Doyle piles contrast upon contrast. A description of the homes of 'hard-handed men' and 'dingy women' succeeds a description of the rich man's house. Again, when the two girls meet accidentally,

> The high-born maid against her will,
> By the pale face was haunted still.
>
> (p. 6)

Again, both girls blossom into beautiful youth, but

> The beauty, which in Edith Vere
> Was as the master-key to life,
> Had been to Ellen, in her sphere.
> A cup, with luscious poison rife.
>
> (p. 18)

To his credit, Doyle never allows the contrast to be overdone; each set of contrast is made to contribute to the dominant emotion of the story, and that emotion never deteriorates into soppy sentimentality as it does in another poem on the same theme, an obvious plagiarism of Doyle's poem, 'The Two Maudes' by Julia Day.[20] Doyle's use of the iambic tetrameter is very effective and it is a pity that he did not persist with this kind of poetry.

Three anonymous works, dealing with 'modern' themes but having little distinction of technique, may be classed as crude verse-novels: *Stella—A Poem of the Day* (1845), *Amy of the Peak* (1846), and *Modern Life* (1847). The author (obviously a woman) of *Stella* intends to show, as she writes in the Preface, 'upon how unreal and unnatural a basis the system of *her* [Woman's] education is, for the most part, carried on.' As a verse-novel, *Stella* is weak in incidents and emotional appeal while the avowed purpose of criticizing woman's education has not been worked out. A feeble performance as a novel and feebler still as poetry, *Stella* is still notable for the introduction (though there is no skilful co-ordination) of songs and such useful features of the technique of the novel as extracts from letters and journals. *Amy of the Peak*, plainly a Temperance tract, draws our attention to its use of Derbyshire dialect. *Modern Life* is throughout moralistic in tone while the title is justified inasmuch as the setting is fully modern, with descriptions of undergraduate life in Oxford, class distinctions in society, and profligacies of London life. There is variety in the character-interest though little interplay of motives. The career of the hero, Edward, resembles that of Thackeray's Pendennis, and the mildly ironical moralizings of the author may have been inspired by the greater author. George John Cayley's *Sir Reginald Mohun*, praised on the whole by a reviewer in the Pre-Raphaelite magazine, *The Germ*,[21] is an attempt to write a verse-novel in the manner and tone of *Don*

Juan. An ardent apologist of the aristocracy in everything, given to interminable platitudes that overlay the course of the story, the writer fails to sustain the smart tone of the realistic wisdom of the earlier cantos in the sentimentality of the later. The poem however gives a story of modern life indeed, referring to Tennyson's poetry, G. P. R. James, 'Honey-dew Cavendish' tobacco, and undergraduate life at Cambridge. It is possible to find echoes of Pendennis in this work too. With more restraint, Cayley's fluent style would have suited his kind of light-hearted story-telling; as it is, the low-comedy conversations of the servants are quite well done.

V

By far the two most successful writers of the verse-novel in the Early Victorian period were Clough and Mrs. Browning. With Clough, the adoption of this unusual form was an artistic necessity seeing that his aim was to write about modern life. That Clough calls *The Bothie* 'a long-vacation pastoral' and describes it as a work of 'fiction', show that although he did not call it a verse-novel, the term being yet unfamiliar, he was fully conscious of the novelty of the form. All his long poems, *The Bothie*, *Amours de Voyage*, *Mari Magno*, *Dipsychus*, are verse-tales of modern life and each makes experiment with a fresh technical device.

Clough's principal interests are obviously character and emotion, yet the stories as such are far from uninteresting though not exceptional. Indeed, it is the ordinariness of incidents that endows the stories with a sense of reality, 'the aspect of *fact* pervading "the Bothie",' as a reviewer in the *Germ*[22] put it. Thus *The Bothie* tells the story of an undergraduate spending his vacation in the Highlands, reading and arguing and speculating about social doctrines, presently falling in love with a local girl and finally marrying her; *Amours de Voyage* shows an introspective young man meeting a girl in Rome and loving her but unable eventually to marry her for sheer lack of will power. 'The Lawyer's First Tale' in *Mari Magno* is of an unheroic hero, and so is 'The Clergyman's First Tale'; 'The Mate's Story' narrates the commonplace incident of a ship's captain marrying a stranded French girl; 'The Clergyman's Second Tale' tells of Edward, an employee in an Insurance Office who does penance for infidelity to his wife. In all these tales, the characters are unheroic and the incidents ordinary.

The only story that has a slightly romantic tinge is that of Christian in 'The Lawyer's Second Tale'. It was this ordinariness, verging almost on anti-climax, of the end of *Amours de Voyage* that disappointed Emerson and other American friends.[23]

Clough's stories, with the exception of *Dipsychus*, deal with the nature of love and marriage. Indeed, the tales of *Mari Magno* are avowedly 'of love and marriage'. *Amours de Voyage* tells of love that fails to consummate itself in marriage; *The Bothie* ends in marriage of which the nature is hinted at in the Rachel-and-Leah allegory suggested in Hobbes's congratulatory letter. The unfinished sequel to *Dipsychus*—*Dipsychus Continued*—deals with the effects of the hero's relations with a woman in early life. Writing of love and marriage, Clough however refrains from offering any central philosophy of life (his scepticism would not admit of any central philosophy) but remains content with showing cross-sections of contemporary life with comments on manners and conventions.

There is considerable variety in Clough's characterization. In *The Bothie*, not only Philip, Adam, and the other Oxonians have been drawn neatly, other persons who appear for even brief periods, such as the Marquis of Ayr, Sir Hector, and even the youngest piper, have been sketched skilfully and endowed with individuality. The vicar in the first tale of the lawyer in *Mari Magno*, is a descendant of Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose. Edward in 'The Clergyman's Second Tale' and Claude are permanent contributions to English fiction.

Clough's women are however not as well portrayed as his men. Elspie in *The Bothie* is not firmly drawn, and indeed one is left wondering where her charm lies. Mary Trevellyn in *Amours* is a mere cog in the wheel of the story but there is more skill in the slight sketch of her sister Georgina, who is out of patience with the shilly-shallyings of Claude and betrays characteristic femininity in her confidence to her friend,

'Dearest Louise; how delightful to bring young people together!' Despite statements in his poems to the contrary, Clough never shed off his chivalrous attitude towards women which explains why his heroines, Elspie, Emilia, and Christian are covered with an obscure glory. Clough's characters are static; the only character that may be said to grow is Philip Hewson but even in his case, the growth, while showing a certain degree of intellectual maturity, does not affect his conduct and manners. This growthlessness arises from two interrelated causes: lack of sufficient incidents in the story, and the poet's preoccupation with a thesis.

Clough adapted his style to the modern character of his tales. *The Bothie* was praised by the reviewer in *The Germ* on the following ground:

> The metre he has chosen, the hexametral, harmonizes with the spirit of primitive simplicity in which the poem is conceived; is itself a background, as much as are 'Knoydart, Croydart, Moydart, Morrer, and Ardnamurchan' and gives a new individuality to the passages of familiar narrative and everyday conversation. It has an intrinsic appropriateness.
>
> (*The Germ*, January 1850, p. 35)

Phrases repeated and cues remembered build up a delightful atmosphere of clever but candid undergraduate talk. The style is kept carefully at the level of conversation. A similar appropriateness distinguishes the style of *Amours de Voyage* in which the letters of Claude echo the light-heartedness and intellectual keenness of Clough's own letters written to his mother and his friend F. T. Palgrave at the time the poem was being composed. Equally pliable is the iambic tetrameter used in *Dipsychus* and *Mari Magno*.

The story of *The Bothie* is narrated by the omnipresent and omniscient author whose point of view however is obviously identical with that of Adam, 'The Tutor, the grave man, nicknamed Adam'. This is not remote from Thackeray's technique

in *The Newcomes* where the novelist himself speaks through Pendennis the narrator. The story of *Amours de Voyage* is conveyed through a series of epistles, mostly from Claude to Eustace, although some letters of Georgina and Mary have been admitted presumably to fill in the gaps. The epistolary technique of this verse-novel necessitates the introduction of items that are not strictly relevant to the action of the story, such as Claude's comments on Roman architecture and Catholicism, but Clough deftly uses these comments to develop the character of Claude. *Amours* is the earliest epistolary verse-novel in the language, anticipating by four years Charles Swain's attempt in the same direction in *Letters of Laura D'Auverne to Bertha* (1853) and by more years Patmore's *The Victories of Love* (1862). *Dipsychus* is a notable attempt to show the interplay of an introspective person's conscious and subconscious personalities in a series of soliloquies that never allow us to forget the background of contemporary life. None of these experiments attains to flawless success, but we realize that Clough's restless mind was trying to reach a form that would help him represent contemporary life without overmuch intrusion of the personal element.

VI

The Chaucerian pattern of the *Canterbury Tales*, adopted in *Mari Magno*, might have given Clough the poetic form that he was searching for, but he did not live to work out the pattern in full. It is a significant coincidence that Clough and Mrs. Browning, both choosing to write about modern life, should have been admirers of Chaucer and Crabbe.[24] Unlike Clough, Mrs. Browning does not draw upon Chaucer for a poetic pattern and the scheme of *Aurora Leigh* certainly does not resemble that of the *Canterbury Tales.* Nevertheless, seeing that Mrs. Browning's letters to Kenyon and Browning planning a novel-poem, follow close upon her work at a joint modernization of Chaucer, it is possible that the idea of writing a verse-tale of modern life might have come to her through Chaucer. She was, besides, a voracious reader of novels, especially French novels, as the numerous references in her letters indicate and on one occasion, she light-heartedly wrote: 'On my tombstone may be written "*Ci-git* the greatest novel-reader in the world," and nobody will forbid the inscription.'[25]

Mrs. Browning's first attempt at the novel-poem was in 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship' of the 1844 volume of *Poems.* The main poem is a letter of Bertram the poet, and although the sub-title is 'A Romance of the Age', this is a plain story of love in a modern setting rather than an interpretation of the age, a story that seems to be Mrs. Browning's modification of the 'Locksley Hall' situation. 'I don't agree with Mr. Harness,' she wrote to Miss Mitford on 20 August 1847, 'in admiring the lady of "Locksley Hall". I *must* either pity or despise a woman who could have married Tennyson and chose a common man.' The story of *Aurora Leigh* is much more complicated, and the

poet's ability to interpret the spiritual requirements of the age, strengthened in the meantime by her practice in analytical verse in *Casa Guidi Windows*, is now mature and resolute. In its barest outline, there is nothing particularly attractive about the story: it is the old story of one man loving two women. There is however considerable ingenuity in the representation of the relations between Romney and Marian Erle. What makes a story interesting is rather the telling of it than its facts, and, as Virginia Woolf testifies to it,[26] the story of *Aurora Leigh* does keep us enthralled—'the Ancient Mariner who lingers, for unknown reasons, at the porch of one book and not of another, has us by the hand, and makes us listen like a three years' child.' The story is narrated in straightforward sequence: the childhood and early girlhood of Aurora in Italy; her father's death and her coming to England; her education fit for a young English lady, under the guidance of her aunt; her association with Romney; the growth of her poetic talents; her rejection of Romney's offer of marriage; the somewhat complicated episode of Romney, Marian Erle, and Lady Waldemar; the vicissitudes of Romney's Christian Socialism; Aurora's re-union with Marian; her re-union with Romney, now a blind and afflicted man. It is a direct and rapid sequence, told with a good deal of zest that prevents the irrepressibly constant didacticism from sinking into tedium. To the reader familiar with Mrs. Browning's writings, the style is the 'headlong' style[27] of the letters (which, again, appears to have been her spoken style) moulded into blank verse, not very finished or supple or beautiful, but always energetic, individual, and suitable to the artistic pretence of an autobiographical narration.

Although Mrs. Browning's emphasis is throughout on emotions and ideas rather than on incidents, there is actually no dearth of concrete facts to provide adequate background to the ideas and emotions. The death of the aunt, Romney's futile attempt to give thirty thousand pounds to Aurora,

Marian Erle's disappearance on her wedding day, Aurora's discovery of Marian in Paris, are events that are quite impressive on their own account, that facilitate the total emotional effect of the story, and at the same time provide Aurora (and therefore Mrs. Browning) with opportunities for continuous philosophizing. In the long run, Aurora's character fails to convince because although it is around her that the eddy of life gyrates, her part is primarily that of a spectator and commentator rather than of an actor and a certain impersonality and dimness inevitably inhere to such a character. Mrs. Browning confessed to having projected her own self into Aurora,[28] but the projection was of fragments that corresponded more to her fancy than to any living reality. It is in the minor characters that Mrs. Browning excels: Aurora's aunt; Lady Waldemar (a character, as it were, straight from Thackeray); Lord Howe; Sir Blaise Delorme. Mrs. Browning brings to bear her best abilities equally upon didactic occasions and descriptive opportunities such as the long, tedious wait at the church on Romney's wedding-day, the gossip among fashionable men and women, the excitement of the common people, Romney's 'terrible calm above the tumult', Lady Waldemar's trick on the unsuspecting Marian. The finest of all descriptions is that of Aurora's first sight of Marian in Paris as she absent-mindedly threads her way through the crowd:

> You have done more for the man
> Than if you dressed him in a broad-cloth coat
> And warmed his Sunday pottage at your fire.
> Yet Romney leaves me.........
> God ! what face is that ?
> O Romney, O Marian !
> Walking on the quays
> And pulling thoughts to pieces leisurely,
> As if I caught at grasses in a field
> And bit them slow between my absent lips

And shred them with my hands........
What face is that?
What a face, what a look, what a likeness!
Full on mine
The sudden blow of it came down, till all
My blood swam, my eyes dazzled. Then I sprang....
(*Aurora Leigh*, VI,223-34)

All Mrs. Browning's skill in characterization and story-telling has been made subordinate to her principal purpose of representing the age. Virginia Woolf says:

> If Mrs. Browning meant by a novel-poem, a book in which character is closely and subtly revealed, the relations of many hearts laid bare, and a story unfalteringly unfolded, she failed completely. But if she meant rather to give us a sense of life in general, of people who are unmistakably Victorian, wrestling with problems of their own time, all brightened, intensified, and compacted by the fire of poetry, she succeeded.
> (*The Common Reader*, London, 1932, second series, p. 212)

The truth of the matter would seem to lie in Virginia Woolf's second sentence. We know that the idea of writing a poem of the age came to Mrs. Browning long before the story came, and possibly she refrained from thinking of a story until she had found that she had sufficient knowledge of the times. *Aurora Leigh* touches contemporary life at several important points: the Victorian aim, in the context of an industrially growing, democratically developing and scientifically marching age, to reach a synthesized philosophy of life and a harmonious social system; the Victorian poet's problem of correlating art and life; class-differences in society; the idealist's attempt to serve and improve society even at great personal risk; the position of woman in society, and so on. And all these interests have been woven into the story of Aurora with such skill and veracity and passion, with such understanding of general issues

and alertness to particular facts, that even though it is not a great work of art, no one can be said to have estimated the significance of Victorian fiction properly who has not read *Aurora Leigh*, no one can claim to have understood the Victorian temper who has ignored *Aurora Leigh*. So steeped is Mrs. Browning in her age that not only does she allude to 'Melbourne's poor-bills', 'Ashley's factory bills', 'Prince Albert's model lodging-house', the 'nereids neatly draped,' Guizot, Fourier, Dickens and Comte, but many of her characteristic images blossom out of her constant awareness of her times:

A mere mere woman, a mere flaccid nerve,
A kerchief left out all night in the rain,
Turned soft so....................
(III, 337-39)

You're dull as any London afternoon.
(III, 678)

The cruel yellow morning pecked at her.
(III, 1094)

You've forgot her utterly
As any last year's annual.
(VI, 361-62)

Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog,
Involve the passive city, strangle it
Alive, and draw it off into the void,
Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as if a sponge
Had wiped out London.
(III, 179-183)

The kinship between such images (these are a very few out of a multitude) and those that have characterized English poetry of the last half century, is not altogether remote in spirit and even in structure.

VII

What features of the verse-novel emerge from the works that we have considered? Doubtless, the modernity of the story is of prime importance. Unless the poem be grounded firmly on contemporary events and attitudes, it fails to be distinct from the romantic verse-tale, and unless again these events and attitudes are recognizably and specifically of the times rather than timeless and general, the poem would be undistinguishable from the idyl. When Wordsworth and Tennyson (in poems like 'Michael' and 'Dora') re-moulded the classical idyl to contain tales of modern life, they were moving in the direction of the verse-novel but their idyls, concerned with rural life, touched the contemporary scene at its unspecific, traditional and even universal aspects. The idyl is certainly an ancestor of the verse-novel but the verse-novel comes into its own only when it becomes conscious of the particular point of development in civilization to which its age belongs. Most Early Victorian verse-novelists are keenly aware of their times and most of them aim at writing an epic or a poem 'of the times'. Analyzing the elements of their modernity, we shall find them in those aspects of nineteenth century civilization which ensued from the impacts of science, technology and democracy on British society; to a large extent, these impacts were more clearly perceptible in urban society than in the rural, and the best of these verse-novels tell stories of city-life. By this emphasis on urban content, the Early Victorian verse-novels can claim a not very distant ancestry to twentieth century poems of similar content like the 'Spoon River Anthology' and 'The Everlasting Mercy'.

In the verse-novel, character and incident are at least as important as the emotional tone. The tendency of the more successful writers is to move towards a fusion of such components of fiction as emotion, character, and incident. If emotion preponderates, the effect becomes too lyrical for an objective presentation of life. If, on the other hand, emotion is too subdued, the work loses its major prerogative as poetry. This fusion is perceptible in William Bell Scott's 'Rosabell', Francis Hastings Doyle's *The Two Destinies*, and Coventry Patmore's 'Lilian'; it reaches near-perfection in *Aurora Leigh*, *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* and *Amours de Voyage*. Judging by later specimens of the *genre* like *Enoch Arden* and *Inn Album*, William Allingham's *Laurence Bloomfield*, James Thomson's *Vane's Story* and Owen Meredith's *Lucile* and *Glenaveril*, some competent works by such women-poets as 'Violet Fane' (*Denzil Place: a story in verse* and *Mrs. Jerringham's Journal*), and Emily Hickey (*Michael Villiers, idealist*), the value of the pioneer work of the Early Victorians is not inconsiderable.

The passion for the modern story leads to the treatment and interpretation of the manners and problems of contemporary life. The question of the relation between the two sexes, especially, women's position in society, is raised by several writers. Among other questions are those of rural economy, the gospel of work and moral earnestness, the nature of art, class-differences, and the relation between the individual and society. Inevitably, this preoccupation with abstract questions which the writers do not always succeed in reducing to terms of concrete incidents and behaviour, produces a prolix didacticism which is sometimes the bane of these novels as works of art. *Aurora Leigh*, for example, occasionally introduces didactic musings and speculations which far outstrip the limits and sanction of the immediate situation. And yet at times, as with *Amours de Voyage* and

The Two Destinies, the didactic element may act as a leaven to an otherwise somnolent story. If resolute didacticism be a fault of the Victorian verse-novel, it is no less an inescapable feature of Victorian prose-fiction and indeed of the whole of Victorian literature; it is an integral part of Victorian culture and outlook.

The method of story-telling is conventional as a rule—with a beginning, a middle, and an end, succeeding one another in clear progression. Sometimes, as especially in *Aurora Leigh*, the beginning is lengthy and elaborate, going back to the story of the heroine's parents, or as in *The Sons of the Soil*, narrating the early life of William Herbert. This is a safe method, whereas attempts to explain the context incidentally, like Sterling's in *The Election*, attain small success. The plain narrative may be occasionally enlivened with dramatic touches as in *Aurora Leigh*. Bulwer is more melodramatic than dramatic in the catastrophe of 'The Ill-Omened Marriage', while Clough manages the climax of *Amours* by the use of the brief and hasty letters of Claude and Mary. The most remarkable of all the methods used by these writers is Bell Scott's quick shifting of scenes. To enhance the interest of their narratives, some writers employ the technique of orchestrated lyrics—the kind of technique that we observe in so important a poet as Tennyson (*Maud*) and so poor but prolific a versifier as John Edmund Reade.[29] Lyrics and songs, letters,[30] journals and monologues (particularly in *Aurora Leigh*) testify to the variety of technique employed in the Early Victorian verse-novel. True, the weakest point of these writers is in the organization of plot—a weakness that they share with most contemporary writers of prose fiction—but in characterization, their achievement is not mean and some portraits in *Ernest*, *The Election*, *The Bothie*, *Amours de Voyage* and *Aurora Leigh* have been drawn with keen and deep human sympathy.

The second great problem confronting the writers of these verse-novels is that of metre and style. Of the several metrical forms used, rhymed iambic lines, blank verse, tetrameter, and hexameter, it is the blank verse that adapts itself best to the verse-tale of contemporary manners although Clough's use of the hexameter is an experiment worth following up. Occasionally, there is commendable fluidity, conversational buoyancy and vigour in the lines of Sterling, Capel Lofft, Bulwer, Charles Swain and above all Mrs. Browning, but, all in all, the Early Victorian verse-novel suffers from the same diffusiveness and conventionality of style that mars so much of Victorian poetry in general. The writers are either too facile and spineless in their style as Mrs. Norton or too impassioned as Mrs. Browning and Capel Lofft. It is rarely that the style corresponds to the varying emotional level of the story, nor is there much dramatic variety and individuality in the utterances of the different characters. This stylistic inflexibility brings the didactic tone into aggressive prominence ; we feel like being lectured to by the poet in his or her own person and the moral deductions seldom steal upon us through the interplay of character and action. Virginia Woolf's observation in connexion with *Aurora Leigh* is generally applicable to all Early Victorian verse-novels : 'Blank verse has proved itself the most remorseless enemy of living speech.'[31]

'FERMENTING YEAST'
—THE VERSE OF THE EARLY VICTORIAN SOCIAL SITUATION

I

> *The fifteen years from 1830 to 1845, which may well be termed the era of the Reform Act, were among the most critical in the history of England. The time was out of joint. The misery and discontent of city artisans and village labourers were past dispute.*
>
> A. V. Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England*, p. 210

In Early Victorian England, the social situation evoked as much dissatisfaction as enthusiasm. In the Railway Age, while certain sections of the British people groaned under the crushing load of iniquitous laws and customs, there were also powerful and persevering forces working for the progressive welfare of the people. If railway-making did 'more harm than good to the agricultural population', causing 'employment of a demoralising nature, heavy burden by accidents, bastardry, crime;'[1] if an economic gloom that hung over rural England for years led to Kentish risings, agitation for the repeal of the Corn Law, and a sharp rise in emigration; it was also true that railway development coincided with an unprecedented fillip to metallurgy and mining, and that it facilitated the supply of goods to an 'unlimited demand of unprotected markets in the tropics and sub-tropics'.[2] An instance of the contemporary popular belief in progress occurs in an unsigned article[3] that came out in 1834 in one of

the magazines. The writer asserts his 'conviction that never was so much done, in the same space of time, since the world began, especially as these revolutions more particularly relate to and affect Britain and British society.' He refers to the 'wonderful changes' that have taken place since 1800, mentioning Catholic emancipation, abolition of slavery, changes in the poor law, and the establishment of beer-houses. The British empire, he notes, has extended vastly, but what is that empire 'compared with the strides she [Britain] has made in art, science and mechanism since 1800?' Among the novelties that have appeared in British life are changed modes of travelling; the introduction of vaccination; reconstruction in London; new roads, bridges, and docks; new theatre houses; the roads of Macadam; great engineering works like the breakwater at Plymouth; the tunnel under the Thames; the chain pier at Brighton; the metropolitan police. The writer finally asks rhetorical questions: 'Who in 1800 would have expected to find water without digging for it? Who would have engraved upon stone? Who would have thought of calculating sums by machinery? Who would have thought of stuffing cushions with iron for softness?'

Anxiety, excitement, and agitation ran parallel to such high hopes. The *laissez-faire* policy of early nineteenth century industrialism ushered in a number of social evils such as child-labour, sweated labour, drunkenness among the workers, and disruption of family life, but the same industrialism also aroused the conscience of social workers and heightened the labourers' sense of the need of organized action. The social ferment of the age stimulated Cobden's fight for parliamentary reforms and for justice to the poor, Owen's lead in the cooperative movement, Francis Place's services to trade unionsim, Ashley's tenacious steering of a series of factory legislations, and Chadwick's Public Health Act. A.V. Dicey is one of those who regard the Chartist agitation as

an inevitable consequence of the unstable condition of contemporary society.

> The demand for the People's Charter was the sign of a social condition which portended revolution....Men who have known England only during the years of prosperity and of general goodwill which have followed the repeal of the Corn Laws, can hardly realise the urgency with which the 'state of England question' thrust itself upon the attention of the public between 1832 and 1840. It was a terrible question enough; it was nothing else than the inquiry, how, if at all, was it possible to alleviate the miseries and remove the discontent of the working classes?
>
> (A. V. Dicey, op. cit. pp. 211-12)

There is point indeed in Carlyle's definition of Chartism: 'Chartism means the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition therefore or the wrong disposition, of the Working Classes of England.' Again: 'These Chartisms, Radicalisms, Reform Bill, Tithe Bill, and infinite other discrepancy, and acrid argument and jargon that there is yet to be, are *our* French Revolution.'

There is sufficient evidence in the economic and social history of England to indicate that the most striking feature of the years between 1830 and 1848 was 'the emergence and prominence of the social questions'. A disturbing consequence of this social ferment was an acute class-hatred. As early as 1820, Walter Scott had referred in a letter to 'the unhappy dislocation which has taken place betwixt the employer and those in his employment.' In 1842, Sidney Herbert spoke thus at a church meeting:

> There is too little communication between classes in this country. We want, if not the feeling, at least the expression, of more sympathy on the part of the rich towards the poor; and more personal intercourse between them.

In *Mary Barton*, Mrs. Gaskell comments thus on the economic conditions of the English working classes during the Early Victorian period:

> This disparity between the amount of the earnings of the working classes and the price of their food, occasioned, in more cases than could well be imagined, disease and death. Whole families went through a gradual starvation. They only wanted a Dante to record their sufferings. And yet even his words would fall short of the awful truth; they could only present an outline of the tremendous facts of the destitution that surrounded thousands upon thousands in the terrible years 1839, 1840, and 1841... The most deplorable and enduring evil that arose out of the period of commercial depression to which I refer, was this feeling of alienation between the different classes of society.
>
> (*Mary Barton*, ch. viii)

The distress which came to a head in 1840, had been accumulating for a long time, and, during the two decades between 1830 and 1850, assumed a particularly acute form. Allied to various political issues, the economic distress was the chief feature of the social situation of the period, and although not even a minor Dante arose to incorporate the situation in enduring and sustained poetry, a good deal of the verse of the period actually concerned itself with the perplexity and the class-alienation to which Mrs. Gaskell refers. No study of Victorian literature—of Victorian poetry, in particular—can be complete without a consideration of this verse of contemporary social distress.

II

The Reform Act of 1832 evoked a great deal of excitement. In one of Thomas Wade's 'Reform Bill Hymns', we have a representative expression of Radical expectations that this Act would punish the aristocrats, and possibly even eliminate all class-inequality:

> The Hoary Dotard, Aristocracy,
>   Shakes in his crumbling palace-halls; for, hark !
> On the broad ocean of Democracy
>   Floats Liberty . . . .
>
> (*Mundi et Cordis &c.* 'A Song of the People')

The targets of the angry have-nots were the Church and the aristocracy—the latter described by Wade as the 'bubbles and butterflies of men':

> Unto the Mass
> Who toil with head or hand, what boot the feuds
> That furnish gabble to your heated moods,
> When truth runs over with wine, and shows ye—liars !
> We must have answer to our great desires
> For Social Progress; or we force the way,
> And o'er ye, as a mighty whirlwind pass !
>
> (Ibid. 'To the Peers')

This hatred of the aristocracy was further whetted when proletarian expectations were frustrated by the limited scope of the Reform Act. In the forties, Ebenezer Jones thus dramatized a scene of the French Revolution with an eye to the contemporary English situation:

> 'Death to the aristocrats !' the people roared,—
> Death to my master—each man freely thought,—

As through the capital of France they poured,
A revolution's mob, with madness fraught.
(*Studies in Sensation and Event*, 'A Slave's Triumph')

The effects of the Reform Act were interpreted by the various political parties according to their particular ways of thinking. If the Tories came out with such verse-pamphlets as *Men and Measures; Or, the Political Panorama* (1839) and *Agitation, A Political Essay* (1843)—both of anonymous authorship—the Radicals answered with the anonymous *A Trifle for the Tories* (1841) and *The Times. A Poetical Jeu d'esprit* (1839). R. H. Horne's play, *Spirit of the Peers and the People*, anonymously published in 1834, is perhaps the most notable of all Radical works of the time. The avowed aim of the play is to represent the complete cleavage between the rulers and the ruled in England, to show misrule at work, to emphasize the oppressive element of law, and to expose the selfishness and hypocrisy of the Church. Although the allegory used is quite obvious, the satire in this play on what has been called the Great Egg of Reform, shows that all the excitement preceding the Reform Act had ended in an anticlimax and that John Bull was, after all, left as ever at the mercy of machinating social parasites. The Tory point of view is presented in *The Reform Ministry, and the Reformed Parliament* (1834) by Nahum Whistlecraft—obviously a pseudonym—who calls himself the 'Parliamentary Poet Laureate' and blatantly emulates the style of *Don Juan*:

Our grand state maxim being 'We would be better,'
'Whatever is, is wrong'; and so on 'Men
Must keep progressing';—change, that whig-begetter,
Being our specifick. . . . . . .
(Canto I, xiv)

We've ventured at some length on these 'Reforms,'
Or rather changes, which must sweep away

Things that have stood a thousand years the storms,
 The test of many a trial. In one day
Those bulwarks, levell'd by our powerful arms,
 —Lie prostrate in the dust.
 (Canto V, xvii)

A remarkable travesty of Tory politics occurs in John Sterling's *The Election*, anonymously published in 1841. A parliamentary bye-election forms the background of the verse-narrative; the deliberations of party-conclaves and the election speeches are convincingly realistic. The vote-catching speech of Mogg on the hustings is Sterling's version of Tory politics. He loves his country so dearly, Mogg declares, that he has never visited a foreign country and has never liked foreign food. 'What about the port wine that you drink?' queries a chimney sweep from the audience. The resourceful Mogg answers, 'Ah, I sometimes drink wine, it's true, but that is only to help our great Commercial Interest.' And so he proceeds with his views on Corn Laws, the Constitution, British Freedom, and the Church:

I love the Constitution, yet maintain
'Tis far too mild tow'rds all who dare complain.
Our boast is British Freedom; no one here
Needs learn, work, dress, or eat from slavish fear.
The rich their daily joint in freedom carve;
The poorest men in equal freedom starve;
And he who naked in a ditch expires,
Yet dies with freedom like his freeborn sires.
.. ..
A loyal Church that keeps the rich and poor
Duly apart, not blends the lord and boor.
.. ..
My thoughtful friends, I stick to Church and State;
The State, that guards our rights, and lives, and cash,
And scorns all change as impudent and rash;

The Church, that one day out of every seven
Throws wide the turnpike between us and Heaven.
(*The Election*, Book IV)

This crude banter contrasts with Ebenezer Elliott's vigorous onslaught on anti-reform Tories who are supposed to announce their creed thus:

No printing ! the printers are devils,
Whose lore teaches slaves to be free:
Long life to all orthodox evils,
Our watchword and motto shall be.
The dust of Old Sarum is holy,
In our hearts live her ramparts and towers;
No progress ! improvement is folly:
The foes of Green Gatton are ours.
(*Corn Law Rhymes*, 'Creed o'the Canny')

Elliott acclaims the passing of the Reform Bill in several poems of *Corn Law Rhymes*, 'Reform', 'Battle Song', 'The Revolution of 1832', 'The Triumph of Reform', and 'The Press'. An unrelenting advocate of the repeal of the Corn Laws, Elliott gloats over the consequences which, he fancies, will overtake the aristocratic upholders of the laws as soon as the repeal comes to pass. 'The Black Hole of Calcutta' is an unrelieved chant of hatred, splendidly fierce:

What shall bread-tax yet for thee,
Palac'd pauper ? We shall see.
It shall tame thee and thy heirs,
Beggar them and beggar theirs,
Melt thy plate for which we paid,
Buy ye breeches ready made,
Sell my lady's tax-bought gown,
And the lands thou call'st thy own.
Then of courses five or more,
Grapery, horse-race, coach and four,

Pamper'd fox-hounds, starving-men,
Whores and bastards, nine or ten,
Twenty flunkies fat and gay,
Whips and jail for holiday,
Paid informer, poacher pale,
Sneaker's license, poison'd ale,
Seat in senate, seat on bench,
Pension'd lad, or wife, or wench,
Fiddling parson, Sunday card,
Pimp, and dedicating bard,—
On the broad and bare highway,
Toiling there for a groat a day,
We will talk to thee and thine,
Till thy wretches envy mine,
Till thy paunch of baseness howl,
Till thou seem to have a soul.

(*Corn Law Rhymes*)

In the same tone of angry bitterness, Elliott threatens the aristocrats that their destruction is on the way:

Ye coop us up, and tax our bread,
And wonder why we pine;
But ye are fat, and round, and red,
And fill'd with tax-bought wine.
Thus, twelve rats starve while three rats thrive,
(Like you on mine and me,)
When fifteen rats are caged alive,
With food for nine and three.

Haste ! havoc's torch begins to glow,
The ending is begun;
Make haste; destruction thinks ye slow;
Make haste to be undone !
Why ye are call'd 'My lord', and 'squire',
While fed by mine and me,
And wringing food, and clothes and fire
From bread-tax'd misery ?

(*Corn Law Rhymes*, 'Caged Rats')

These outbursts of hate alternate with pathetic narrations of the miseries of the poor—as in the first of the extracts given below—and amidst much foam and froth, one occasionally meets with memorable lyrics:

Child, is thy father dead ?
    Father is gone !
Why did they tax his bread ?
    God's will be done !
Mother has sold her bed;
    Better to die than wed !
Where shall she lay her head ?
    Home we have none !

(*Corn Law Rhymes*, 'Song')

Day, like our souls, is fiercely dark;
    What then ? 'Tis day !
We sleep no more; the cock crows—hark !
    To arms ! away !
They come ! they come ! The knell is rung
    Of us *or* them.
Wide o'er their march the pomp is flung
    Of gold and gem.

(*Corn Law Rhymes*, 'Battle Song')

Among Elliott's many contemporary admirers was John Stuart Mill who, in a letter to Carlyle, described the poems of *Corn Law Rhymes* as:

> works which will go down to posterity as one of the principal memorials of this age....these poems, having, as they have, sufficient intrinsic merit to live, will hereafter be a text for annotations, explanations, and commentaries without end, and that future historians....will build largely upon them.
>
> (*Letters of John Stuart Mill*, ed. H. S. R. Elliot, i, p. 28)

The best of his poems pulsate with a passion which, as he himself says[9], takes its origin in actual experience. Though

he was condemned by the *Quarterly*[10] 'for the spirit of ferocious jacobinism', Elliott had really an orthodox social philosophy. Grant him Free-trade and all his ferocity disappears.

> Oh, vengeance !—no, forgive, forgive !
> 'Tis frailty still that errs:
> Forgive !—Revenge ! Shall murderers live ?
> Christ bless'd *his* murderers.
> Father, we only ask our own;
> We say, 'Be commerce free,
> Let barter have his mutton-bone,
> Let toil be liberty.'
> (*Corn Law Rhymes*, 'Oh Lord, How Long ?')

His biographer, G. S. Phillips, adduces evidence[11] of Elliott's anti-communism and anti-Owenism, describes him as 'a redoubted champion of competition', and represents him as saying that free trade would give all that the British people wanted of material wealth while education would gradually introduce a better feeling and a kinder understanding between masters and men. In the preface to *Corn Law Rhymes*, Elliott writes :

> Believing as I do, that the Corn Laws have a direct and rapid tendency to ruin my ten children and their country, with all its venerable and venerated institutions, where is the wonder if I hate the perpetrators of such insane atrocities ?

Between the Tory Nahum Whistlecraft's 'national bulwarks' and Elliott's 'venerable and venerated institutions,' there is no difference. Elliott was no revolutionary, not a wrecker of the social framework. G. S. Phillips says[12] that Elliott, as a poet, would have died to save the working classes, while, as a political economist, he could have seen the earth filled with graves rather than have abandoned it to poor Dudevant, 'Ashley's Cow', and Louis Blanc. A significant dichotomy of sympathies, as we shall presently see.

III

To some of those who did not regard the miseries of industrial or agrarian life as separately remediable but believed them all in the mass to be the product of a basically wrong social philosophy, Owenism offered a comprehensive creed. In *The Reproof of Brutus*(1830), a doctrinaire tract in heroic couplets unillumined by real poetry, John Minter Morgan[13] surveys the various branches of contemporary thought from the angle of an ardent Owenite. The book opens with a vision in which Morgan finds himself in the Coliseum of Rome and hears the shade of Marcus Brutus scold an assembly of English aristocratic tourists. Brutus argues that Britain the land of Alfred, Shakespeare, Hampden, Milton, and Pope, is classic enough in her own rights; why should then these 'pampered parasites', these 'tinsel few', rather spend time in Rome than go back to their own country and help their countrymen ? This unhelpful prologue over, a question put forward by Atticus, 'With so much wealth why poverty is found', leads to a lengthy discussion between the interrogator and the author on the present state of society in England. Morgan explains thus the aim of his work :

The Muse essays—
Foe to all parties, but friend of man—
To join their efforts in one general plan,
Where each shall find its own peculiar aim,
Their means though different, yet their ends the same;
Shall there security with freedom find,
Wisdom with peace, and wealth with love combined.
(*The Reproof of Brutus*, Part I, p. 28)

The first part of the book is a criticism of politicians, the second of economists. In Malthus's theory of population, the wealthy classes, argues Morgan, have found a suitable handle to serve their interests; Macculloch, James Mill, and Bentham suffer from purblind doctrinism, while lawyers like Brougham, Eldon, and Scarlett, are lackeys of social iniquities. Of the poets of England, Shelley alone belongs to the tribe of prophetic bards such as Edward I trembled to hear in the valley of Cambria. It is interesting to note that although Morgan has more or less respect for Wordsworth the poet of nature, Coleridge the metaphysician, Southey the erstwhile progressive, and Tom Moore the patriot, his enthusiasm is deepest for Shelley. He calls Shelley a poet-prophet, and, writing in 1830, refers (in a footnote) to 'the rising fame of Percy Bysshe Shelley'. In Morgan, we have the earliest evidence of that appeal which Shelley has for the socialist writer but, unfortunately, it is not an encouraging evidence. Morgan then turns his attention to religion. Too full of superstitious and intolerant sectarianism, established religion requires to be replaced by Owen's teachings. Once spread, these teachings will arouse to truth equally the savage, the anchorite, the Calvinist, Churchmen, Romanists, Mussulmans, Hindoos, Chinese, in fact, men and women of all varieties of religious persuasions. For special denunciation comes in the Archbishop of Canterbury who is supposed to declare the policy of the Church thus:

> King, and Lords, and Commons, all might sink,
> If at some venial faults we did not wink:
> And as the Lords themselves enact the laws,
> With them 'tis heedful to make common cause.
>
> .. ..
>
> But chief that precept hold we in esteem,
> Which taught obedience to the power supreme,
> 'Render to Caesar all of Caesar's things':-
> That text harmonious to the ear of Kings:

Useful to all if people would obey,—
Taxes and tithes without reluctance pay;
And with submissive patience humbly wait,
To see all righted in a future state.
(*The Reproof of Brutus*, Part VI, pp. 165-66)

An exposition of the ideal social structure comes in the seventh and last part of the book. A Socialist of the Owenite tribe, Morgan naturally believed in pacifism.

Ye kings, urge no more inglorious fight,
See the scales of heaven prove your actions light.
(*Poetical Works*, p. 65)

Wars should be sanctioned

Not when kings with furious anger rage,
But when heavens the war of justice wage.
(Ibid. p. 65)

Morgan is unaware of the baffling situation when each contending party claims it to be a holy and just war from its particular point of view.

Morgan's zeal for Owenism is offset by William Dearden's vigorous distrust of every attempt to tamper with the existing order of things; especially odious to his middle-class notions is the Owenite brand of sexual morality.

A subtle Sciolism, from hell let loose,
Decked out in tinsel theories so spruce,
Its wild phantasmas of a life all bliss,
Portrays as possible, in a world like this !
Deluded ignorance, void of every doubt,
Hails the bright picture with ecstatic shout;
Sees, in perspective, the old Moral World,
With all its follies into chaos hurled;
And all phoenix-like from OWEN'S prurient brain,
A glorious system spring without a stain !

No longer man to man an abject thrall,
But equal rights, and equal toil to all !
The crownless king, the uncoroneted lord,
Lab'ring; and feasting at the self-same board,
With the rude boor they once had frowned to see.

.. ..

The bond of union between man and wife
Being not, as now, a heavy chain for life,
But light as that which yoked each cooing dove
To the bright chariot of the Queen of Love;
As easy at any time, to be transferred
From Sue to Sally as from bird to bird,

.. ..

O blest Community ! no restrictive law
To bind the will, or with religious awe,
Restrain the passions in their wild career—
No GOD to worship—and no hell to fear !

(*The Vale of Caldene*, Bk. IV, sec. ii)

Dearden diagnoses the cause of all social miseries as 'Insatiate AVARICE', 'the poison'd chalice of the nation's woe' (IV, x), and represents the non-industrial middle-class gentry in his denunciation of trade-profits.

IV

Like the Owenites, the Chartists too held to a 'general plan', but while Owenism was pacifist in method, Chartism was an insurrectionist movement, fierce and angry even when for a while non-violence was approved. Capel Lofft's *Ernest; Or, Political Regeneration*, was hailed as a Chartist document by the few reviewers who noticed it. The reviewer in the *Monthly Magazine*,[14] presumably its editor, the bumptious John Abraham Heraud, called the work 'the Chartist Epic', and Dean Milman, the reviewer in the *Quarterly*, found in it 'the growth, struggles, and triumph of chartism'. The book has a curious history. Capel Lofft (1806-1873) was a well-to-do man, educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, who joined the Middle Temple but preferred association with political agitators to his profession. The poem, as the *Dictionary of National Biography* says, makes use of the traditional German belief in Ernest who, like his Welsh counterpart, King Arthur, will some day return to his people permanently to establish an ideal State. With a dedication 'to the Memory of Milton, the Poet, the Divine, and the Republican', *Ernest* was printed in 1839 without the author's name as the Bodleian copy of this print shows. We cannot definitely say but can only surmise that Milman's disapproval of the revolutionary political doctrine of the epic was shared by many others of the society to which Lofft belonged, and even as the book was in the press, the author probably thought it prudent not to publish it. The book was withdrawn from publication. It was in 1868 that the epic was finally published, this time with the changed title, *Ernest, the Rule of Right*. By that time, the political situation in the

country had changed substantially, Lofft was 62 and he had 'missed the bus'. *Ernest* is not usually mentioned in histories of nineteenth century poetry, anthologists have neglected him, yet it remains a store-house of occasionally excellent and competent poetry and it is certainly one of the most distinguished works in English literature dealing with the theme of revolution.

The principal characters in the narrative of the poem are Frederick Hess and Hermann, the latter in love with the other's daughter, Lucy. When Hermann was a child, he once struck a playmate, the Squire's son; he was rebuked by both the Squire and his father, a peasant turned a schoolmaster. When he grew up, nursing a grievance against social inequality, he became a sort of dissenting preacher, preaching 'faith, the gospel and love'. To this prospective son-in-law, Hess narrates the story of his life which explains why he who was once a prosperous and law-abiding farmer, is now a broken man bent upon violent revolution. The narration covers almost the whole of the 772-line long Book II. Reading this Book, one watches the working up of a naturally peace-loving mind to the white heat of revolutionary frenzy in the attempts of Frederick Hess to convert Hermann to Chartism. As with Ebenezer Elliott, so with Lofft's Hess, political discontent is born of a sense of personal wrong. An unsuccessful litigation against the selfish local pastor over an enclosure had the effect of

> Leaving me bare to the bone; by wealth ground down
> And scattered to the winds; my being swept
> From the face of that fair land where it had birth;
> Myself beggared to rags; my home laid waste,
> My sons turned thief, my daughters prostitute.
>
> (*Ernest*, Bk. II, 323-29)

Hess feels that 'the whole heart of the land is sick,/And the head faint' and he proposes to

. crush out of form,
The artificial fabric of man's life,
And frame it all afresh—darken the throne,
Of kings with the shadow of a giant force,
Striking amain his end—shuffle the fates
Of prince and peasant most confusedly,
Then deal them out anew—and last of all
Set up the gospel of life's governance,
Upon the ruins of the charnel church.

(*Ernest*, Bk. II, 667-75)

This uncompromising desire for revolution has no respect for the accredited leaders of the state who, incapable of a total view of things, have recourse to fragmentary legislative reforms. The Chartists would do away with 'saws of ancient use', give no more heed to 'blear-eyed custom', would 'make level every fence of privilege' abolishing enclosures. They would boil their 'cankered constitution up to fervency and fullness of young blood in the fierce cauldron of democracy'. They will not repeat the mistakes of the 'philosophic fools' who led the French Revolution; they must remove 'the incubus of selfish ownership' and exterminate the giant aristocracy. There shall be communization of land; as for industry, mechanic gear, cattle, and stores, their owners will keep them 'freely to have and give as free'.

Such is Frederick Hess's exposition of the Chartist programme, and although several important details are obscured by the turbid eloquence of the narration, the broad intent is clear enough. Lofft proceeds to deal with the means to be adopted for the fulfilment of the programme. What will the means be, violent or non-violent ? The question is debated by Hermann in powerful passages of self-searching. His native desire was to secure for man his 'proper mastery'

with fair means, and suasive gentleness,
Abhorrent from all force, with the light of truth
By knowledge lit. . . .

.. .. ..

I thought to win by righteousness,
And Christian love, and faith, and purity,
And if they serve not, how should robbery
Fulfil this service ?

(Ibid. III, 440-451)

But the quick rush of events (including a Peterloo-like massacre of rustics in a country fair) sweeps the pacifist Hermann off his feet; the insurrection breaks out, Arthur Hermann is found in some mysterious manner transfigured into the legendary Christopher Ernest, and in the midst of the noisy violence adopted by both the rebels and the rulers, we listen to the desperate harangue of Ernest:

The lawyer and the priest, the thieves 'twixt whom
Sitting in state this people is crucified,
.. ..
They've starved us, have those men, of half our bread,
For two loaves, scantly one—they've made our church
A den of thieves and hirelings baser far,
And for the law, they have so fashioned it,
So murderously, to be a ball of spikes.
.. ..
Go force these villains to gorge up our spoil
Though it come with their heart's blood; then slaughter them
Them, and their sons, on heap—and of their bones
Rear up a pile high as the pyramids.

(Ibid. IX, 576-657)

The spokesman of the aristocrats, anticipating certain defeat, proposes to come to terms with the rebels.

Our strength is rottenness,
Our army falling off from us like flesh
In a fever; mercenary on our side,
But native in affection to our foes.

(Ibid. XII, 165-68)

And so consent we to the people in turn
To rule us, as they must despise of us,
And let the common will be common law.
.. ..

And that hard tax
We now impose on the bread that labour eats,
Frankly we must forego it. Church and State
Must be reformed to such a rule of right
As suits with reason.

(Ibid. XII, 210-21)

An equally fierce urge for revolution dominates the strange 'Ways of Regard' of Ebenezer Jones, that powerful poet whose promise was extinguished by poverty and public indifference. His book of verses, *Studies of Sensation and Event* (1843), found no market nor received any notice from the reviewers beyond a note in the *Athenaeum*,[15] although men like W. J. Fox, R. H. Horne, Barry Cornwall, William Bell Scott and D. G. Rossetti thought well of his work. Years after Jones's death, on the publication of a reprint-edition of the work in 1878, Browning recalled how he had heard Eliot Warburton declaim 'an impassioned Chartist *tirade* in blank verse—the speech of an orator addressing the crowd.'[16] The reference is obviously to 'Ways of Regard'. The complex, philosophical scheme of this poem of 500 lines of blank verse admits at a certain stage the introduction of a rebellious people and their rulers, of a conflict between the many and the few. The rebel chief, excited as much by a grievous personal wrong as by a sense of collective insecurity, makes an impetuous harangue.

Slaves ! Brothers ! are we
Already thus cursed ! Damned are to endurance,
To acquiescence, to contentment ! Oh ! not so !
The habit of obedience hath not slain ye !

Arise ! shake out the fetters from your souls,
And they will leave your limbs ! All is not lost.
Hear me, Oh hear me! We no more are slaves;—
Have we not hearts like men; do we not feel
The voice of kindness;—contemplate with pleasure,
The joys of life; are not our senses human;
.. ..
They break you from the majesty of man,
Into gaunt monsters, crooked miseries,
.. ..
banish from your souls
The light of knowledge, and proclaim you soulless,—
Rend you from God, saying you are not men.
.. ..
Prove, prove that you are men! Revenge! Revenge!—
They bade us feed on grass—we will grow drunk
With their red blood; they trample us as snakes—
We will rise dragon-like, and with our fetters
Act inconceivably !—Revenge ! Revenge !
.. ..
God! we will rush through blood up to our arm-pits!
(*Studies in Sensation and Event*, pp. 181-83)

A young aristocrat espousing the cause of the people, mocks the rulers' counsels thus:

They outcry,
The nation flourishes, its power is vast,
Its wealth supreme. 'Oh, idiot knaves and liars!
Say, is a flag a nation? is an army?
Do half a million traders make a nation?
A thousand lords? The people is the nation.
.. ..
They counsel—If your slave seem fond of freedom,
Starve him, till he be glad to lick your foot
And then get crumbs; if he would fain be wise,
Work him, until the writhing of his body
Shall suffocate his mind; if he would love,

And husband womanhood, let famished children
Of others terrify.

(Ibid. pp. 186-87)

Cleavage and hatred between classes is indeed the most passionate theme of Jones's poem. The rebels assert the essential human dignity that is theirs; they are bent on claiming their fundamental rights. There is a statesman in the poem, 'a voluntary lackey, [who] ever kicks the lowest order', who is contemptuous of the middle classes but serves his own interest by pandering to the self-aggrandizing motives of the privileged few. The whole poem reeks of vitriolic anger against the hydra-headed corruptions of society, moral as well as material; the anger is focused against all classes believed to enjoy vested interests, members of the aristocracy as well as the dignitaries of the Church. It is difficult to imagine poems emitting more furious class-hatred than Ebenezer Jones's 'Ways of Regard', Capel Lofft's *Ernest* and some of the lyrics of Ebenezer Elliott's *Corn Law Rhymes*. The credit of these poets is that they almost achieve poetic excellence in spite of much turbid emotion and abusive language.

No such violence inflames the verses of Thomas Cooper, another Chartist writer who was sent to gaol for carrying on violent propaganda. Cooper was one of 'the uneducated poets'[17] of the age. He was a self-made man who was encouraged by many distinguished men of letters of the day, including Disraeli, Dickens, Forster, Douglas Jerrold, Wordsworth and Carlyle. Cooper befriended several struggling poets, such as William Thom and Thomas Miller—also 'uneducated poets'—and two other Chartist writers, John Bramwich (d. 1846) and William Jones (d. 1855). His remarkable career furnished Charles Kingsley with the model for Alton Locke. In his autobiography,[18] Cooper quotes a hymn by Bramwich of which the last stanza goes thus:

All men are equal in His sight,
The bond, the free, the black, the white:
He made them all,—them freedom gave;
God made the man—Man made the slave!

William Jones's hymn is superior as poetry to the average Chartist hymn:

Sons of poverty assemble,
    Ye whose hearts with woe are riven,
Let the guilty tyrants tremble,
    Who your hearts such pain have given.

    We will never
From the shrine of truth be driven,
.. ..
Must ye faint—ah! how much longer?
    Better by the sword to die
Than to die of want and hunger:
    They heed not your feeble cry:

    Lift your voices—
Lift your voices to the sky!
.. ..
Dire oppression, Heaven decrees it,
    From our land shall soon be hurled:
Mark the coming time and seize it—
    Every banner be unfurled!

    Spread the Charter!
Spread the Charter through the world.

Cooper says in his autobiography that a chant which the Chartists used to sing in course of their parades was wrongly attributed to him; it was actually the composition of an obscure Chartist woman from Wales.

The Lion of Freedom is come from his den;
We'll rally around him, again and again:
We'll crown him with laurel, our champion to be:
O'Connor the patriot: for sweet Liberty!

Like most revolutionary poets, Cooper admired Milton and Shelley[19] but obviously did not learn much from his models. His *Purgatory of Suicides* (1845), consisting of over a thousand Spenserian stanzas, is divided into nine books of which each opens with some invocative stanzas before passing on to a dream of famous suicides of history; the suicides are different on different days. The work lacks an organizing *motif;* the numerous interludes of personal biography and the cogitations on the misery of the common man ramble on without producing any sense of interlinked structure on the reader's mind; the language is that of cheerless rant all through, for rant was the normal mode of expression to Cooper who was an effective mob orator. Cooper's revolutionary verse is at its most poetical in the very first stanza of the *Purgatory of Suicides*:

Slaves, toil no more !—Why delve, and moil, and pine,
To glut the tyrant—forgers of your chain?
Slaves, toil no more ! Up, from the midnight mine,
Summon your swarthy thousands to the plain:—
Beneath the bright sun marshalled, swell the strain
Of Liberty;—and while the lordlings view
Your banded hosts, with stricken heart and brain,—
Shout as one man,—'Toil we no more renew,
'Until the Many cease their slavery for the Few !'

Championship of the cause of industrial labour and fervent belief in the authority of the Many are two among the recurrent themes of the poem. Cooper's anger is directed against kings and priests who, he believes, are responsible for the miseries of the masses.

I hate ye—things with surplices and crowns !—
Serpents that poison,—tigers that devour
Poor human kind,—and fill the earth with groans,
Through every clime ! God send ye were no more !—
Ye'd have a merry requiem, from shore to shore !
(*The Purgatory of Suicides*, Bk. III, st.v)

Following in the footsteps of Shelley, Cooper finds 'freedom's, virtue's, wisdom's direct foe' in 'kingship propp'd by altarcraft'.[20] This anti-monarchism reaches a ludicrous anticlimax in the seventh book where the poet declares his 'devotion leal' to Queen Victoria at the same time that he warns her:

When next thou passest by Whitehall, look up,
I pray thee, and remember who felt there
The fatal axe ! .. ..
.. .. ..
Hunger cries
Throughout thy realm—'Queen ! from the fearful Past—
be wise !'
(Ibid. Bk. VII, st. ix)

Cooper's Chartism did not long survive his prison experience and subsequent literary success. The year 1848 marked the debacle of the Chartist Movement and therefore of the Chartist poets. Cooper, Gerald Massey, and even Ernest Jones emerged in course of time as respectable poets interested in other things than revolution. Ernest Jones, dedicating his *Corayda* (1860) to Bulwer Lytton, writes:

The Republic of Letters is beyond and above the political differences of the passing day....It is well that we should be reminded of this truth. It is well that we should have a common ground, far from the field of party and of passion, where we can meet amid the higher attributes of our humanity. It is well, while there is so much of the sordid and degrading in the poli-

tical arena of the age, that men of widely different politics should say: 'There is something truer and nobler than all this—a calm and holy sanctuary of thought, wherein at least, if nowhere else, all men are brethren, and all brethren are friends.'

Jones, a well-born person, a barrister, became a prominent leader of the Chartists; he was sent to prison for two years in 1848 on charges of sedition and violence. One of the boldest of the Chartists and a writer of some effective verses on the contemporary social ferment, even he, as the paragraph quoted above shows, dichotomized between the poetic faith and the political. Jones's revolutionary verse is to be found in the *Battle-Day: and other Poems* (1855), *The Song of the Lower Classes* (1856), *Songs of Democracy* (1856), and the *Revolt of Hindostan* (1857).

The land it is the landlords';
    The traders' is the sea;
The ore the usurers' coffer fills,
    But what remains for me ?....
I pay for all their learning,
    I toil for all their ease;
They render back, in coin for coin,
    Want, ignorance, disease...
The hour of leisure, happiness,
    The rich alone may see;
The playful child, the smiling wife—
    But what remains for me ?
The coming hope, the future day,
    When wrong to right shall bow,
And hearts that have the courage, man,
    To make that future NOW.

Here are grievances which, as we have seen, have been expressed in more or less similar language also by Ebenezer Elliott, Ebenezer Jones, Capel Lofft and others. The refrain in one of the songs of Ernest Jones—'The Song of the Lower Classes'—is still remembered:

We're low, we're low, we're very, very low.

Gerald Massey, like Thomas Cooper, rose from the ranks to the position of a prominent socialist. At the age of twenty-one, he edited the *Spirit of Freedom*, a cheap journal started in 1849 for the benefit of working-class men. He wrote also in the *Christian Socialist* and the *Leader*, the latter edited by Thornton Hunt. Massey's career attracted persons like F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Walter Savage Landor, and George Eliot, the last of whom created her Felix Holt on the model of Massey. Massey, too, grew into a 'respectable' poet in course of time, described as 'a born laureate of the people, and one of the most thoroughly English poets of the century.'[21] Before, however, he began to dabble in Spiritualism and Shakespeare-criticism, Massey had already produced a sufficient quantity of verse to ensure him a place among the minor poets of the century. The volume entitled *Cries of Forty-Eight* contains a number of competent poems on the theme of social justice.

If faith, and hope, and kindness passed, as coin,
'twixt heart and heart,
Up through the eye's tear-blindness,
how the sudden soul should start !
The dreary, dim, and desolate, would wear a sunny bloom,
And Love should spring from buried Hate,
like flowers from Winter's tomb.
'This world is full of beauty, as other worlds above;
And if we did our duty, it might be as full of love.'

(*Cries of Forty-Eight*, 'This world is full of beauty')

High hopes that burn'd like stars sublime,
Go down i' the heaven of freedom;
And true hearts perish in the time
We bitterliest need'em !
But never sit we down and say
There's nothing left but sorrow:

Through all the long, dark night of years
The people's cry ascendeth,
And earth is wet with blood and tears:
But our meek sufferance endeth!
The few shall not for ever sway—
The many moil in sorrow;
The powers of hell are strong today,
The Christ shall rise tomorrow!
(Ibid. 'Today and Tomorrow')

In Massey's verses, there is no recognizable evidence of his socialism. Unlike J. M. Morgan, Capel Lofft, and William Dearden, he is not the exponent in verse of any particular school of political and social ideology. Like most of the Victorian poets of the social ferment, Massey was a plain humanitarian talking vaguely and piously about hope and faith and kindness and love, of meekness and duty, of the mystical assurance that however gloomy the situation now is, everything will be all right in the end, 'The Christ shall rise tomorrow.' The poetry of Gerald Massey is another instance of the revolutionary ardour frittering itself away in tame generalities. Apart from the fundamental conservatism and mildness that the doctrinism of these poets failed to conceal for any length of time, there was also in the prevalent social conditions a certain dynamics that made it impossible for many conscientious poets to stick to a fixed doctrine. The urge for social revolution grew up in a certain setting of the material conditions of life; as the conditions changed, the urge for social revolution too changed, more or less. A. V. Dicey's comments on the failure of Chartism apply to other brands of social revolution as well:

Chartism had been discredited by the fact that some Chartists sought to attain their ends by the employment or menace of physical force....But between 1848 and 1868, unionism came under the guidance of capable, and from their own point of view, moderate leaders....When Young England came under the

guidance of Mr. Disraeli, Tories could afford at times to exhibit sentimental friendliness towards workmen engaged in conflict with manufacturers whose mills offended the aesthetic taste, and whose radicalism shook the political authority of benevolent aristocrats.

(*Law and Opinion in England*, pp. 241-42)

The empirical English mind, never responsive to set and immutable doctrines, nor sympathetic to the ideas and technique of violent revolution imported from over the turbulent continent, could not believe that the English social scene presented a spectacle of unmitigated iniquity. There were reasons to see silver linings to the clouds. At any rate, it was possible to attain the ends in a constitutional manner.

V

What was then required was not a band of furious insurrectionists, but a group of thoughtful patriots who would work in the parliament for a better order of society. While Owenites, Chartists, and Corn-Law Repealers were fulminating against the aristocracy and demanding immediate social equality, Benjamin Disraeli was inspiring the Young England group with a re-formulated Aristocratic principle of social relations. Disraeli's literary ventures were ancillary to his political objectives, and his literary gifts found better expression in his novels than in his verses, but *The Revolutionary Epick* (1834) is no negligible repository of his social philosophy.

> This work....will....evolve a moral, which governors and the governed may alike peruse with profit; and which may teach wisdom both to monarchs and to multitudes.
>
> (Preface to *The Revolutionary Epick*, p. iv)

In this epic (we had better call it a pseudo-epic), Disraeli is, as his biographer Monypenny points out,[22] under the influence of Milton and Shelley; while 'the diction and the versification of the poem are feebly reminiscent of Milton,' the matter, the machinery, and even the sentiments 'are still more reminiscent of Shelley, though unfortunately of Shelley in his least inspired moments.' In the Early Victorian period, all poets who ambitiously write of the contemporary social ferment are followers of Milton and Shelley. *The Revolutionary Epick* is in three parts. The first expounds the author's social philosophy; the second presents, among other things, historical estimates of Athens, Rome, the English Revolution, and the United States; the third

part relates to Napoleon. Disraeli begins his epic with an exposition of the divine right theory of kingship:

> Kings are gods on earth, and blazing lights
> To guide and bless their race....
> .. ..
> Since
> The race who struggle for their daily life,
> Think only of the life for which they strive,
> Such thoughtless labourers as would surely tend
> The leaves and not the fruit, shall they be let
> To lord it in the vineyard of our joys?
> Deep in the strata of the human heart,
> The seeds of Aristocracy are sown
> A vigorous plant, and soon a nation's pride.
> (*The Revolutionary Epick*, I, xxxi)

From the divine right theory of kingship, Disraeli proceeds to expatiating on the Aristocratic principle of society, essential and beneficial to the social structure. In Book I, also occurs the portrait of the ideal nobleman who, though he is high-born, does not hesitate to mix with the multitude, and, from the vantage-ground of his station, can enjoy a comprehensive view of society. He uses law-given leisure to make that law more loved; he devotes himself to learning and manly pursuits. Disraeli maintains that it was only under the feudal or aristocratic system that agriculture flourished, and commerce and the fine arts: that was the age when man's character was developed, and woman's was elevated. In any society, there are but two classes: the aristocracy, and the populace. What constitutes the People? Not a crowd of vagrant beings, not a 'spawn of slime-begotten entities', but men and women who yield only to Honour, Faith, Justice, love of the Fatherland, devotion to consecrated customs that embalm ancestral deeds.

> And chief of all, that Social Discipline,
> Instinctive in the heart of cultured man,

That prompts the weaker and the poor to view
In their more able brethren leaders apt
To guide and aid. In multitudes thus formed
A throne majestic yielding, and a band
Of nobles dignified, and gently pure,
And holy priests, and reverend magistrates;
In multitudes thus formed, and highly trained
Of Law and Arts, and truthful Prejudice
And holy Faith, the soul-inspired race,
I recognise a P E O P L E.
(Ibid, I, xli)

Class-distinction, not class-antagonism, is the cardinal principle of Disraeli's scheme. That much-boosted principle, Equality, is wrong because unnatural:

What is this Equality ? this vagrant lust,
This panting of indefinite desire,
This cry of feeble spirits, which they crown
With attributes omnipotent, and make
A goddess of their echo ? Is it Truth ?
Is't Justice ? Is it aught that man believes ?
.. ..
Is Nature equal ? Doth she say to man
Go see the mountain in the vale subside ?
.. ..
Yes ! where'er we gaze,
GRADATION is the spell of Nature's sway,
Hence Durability, the power of gods;
Hence Order, Happiness, and Life; and hence
Of parts discordant one harmonious whole.
(Ibid. I, xl)

For the student of Disraeli's politics, the opinions expressed in *The Revolutionary Epick* should be as useful as those embedded in his novels, but the student of poetry cannot find anything poetically remarkable in the work. 'Epic' is a misnomer for

a work in which the writer wholly fails to find a myth to incorporate his thoughts. The language, impassioned, rhetorical, and polished, is of oratory rather than of poetry. Disraeli's judgment was entirely correct when he abandoned poetry although in the preface to *The Revolutionary Epick*, he had 'cursed the destiny' that placed him 'in an age that boasted of being anti-poetical' and had desired to write an epic celebrating the spirit of his time. Two of the Young Englanders, George Sydney Smythe and Alexander Baillie Cochrane, were inspired by Disraeli to write some verses, praising the traditional life of England in language that is a *pot-pourri* of Byron and Felicia Hemans. Smythe, for instance, writes of the old merchants of England in preference to the Whig traders of the Victorian period:

> The land it boasts its titled hosts—they cannot vie with these,
> The merchants of Old England—the Seigneurs of the Seas,
> .. ..
> Not one among the conquerors that are or ever were,
> In wealth, or fame, or grandeur with England may compare.
> But not of this our Sovereign thought, when from her solemn throne,
> She spoke of the Poor, and what they endure, in her low and thrilling tone,
> And offered a prayer that Trade might bear relief through the starving land,
> To the strong man's weakened arm, and his wan and workless hand.
> And by the power, that was her dower, might Commerce once more be
> The Helper of the Helpless, and the Saviour of the Free.
>
> (*Historic Fancies*, 'The Merchants of Old England')

In the verses of Disraeli and Sydney Smythe, we have early examples of the imperialist theme in English poetry.

VI

Such are the treatments in verse of some of the social ideals of the time. The two main themes of the partisan poets, the problem of poverty and the question of social equality, occur in the verses of other writers too who, though they do not identify themselves with any particular social or political movement, are none the less stirred by prevalent social miseries. The bewildering variety of doctrinal slogans which distinguishes the period, is summed up in Charles Mackay's 'The Fermentation':

> 'Give us freedom for the conscience !'
>   'Equal rights !'—'Unfettered Mind !'
> 'Education !'—'Compensation !'
> 'Justice for a mighty nation !'
>   'Progress !'—'Peace with all mankind!'
> 'Let us labour !'—'Give us churches !'
>   'Give us corn wherever it grows !'
>   (*Voices from the Crowd*)

The humanitarian spirit of the age, stimulated by Evangelicalism, ideals of enlightened democracy, and Benthamist faith in progress demanded justice for the weak and the oppressed wherever they might be. We meet with poems exulting over the abolition of the slave trade;[23] poems sympathizing with convicts; poems on the fallen woman; poems emphasizing the sorrows of emigrants. Temperance is the theme of some propagandists, while colonial life finds some spirited exponents. Such of these verses as are not utterly worthless, are saturated with soppy sentimentality, but Mrs. Ellis's (she was Sarah Stickney before marriage) *The Island Queen* stands out by virtue

of its passionate conviction and sincere human sympathy. *The Island Queen* (1846) and an anonymous work, *Pomare. Queen of Tahiti* (1847), are based on the historical facts of the French seizure of Tahiti and the brutal treatment of Queen Pomare of that island. It is doubtful if there is any other poetical work in English which spotlights colonizing tactics more effectively than Mrs. Ellis's poem.

> In all our schemes to civilize mankind
> By planting colonies, this doom we find—
> Extermination—slow, perchance, but sure,
> For how should he, with untaught mind endure
> The tempting snares which on that border ground
> His steps bewilder, and his paths surround ?
> Or how should those who go with purpose shrewd
> To seize whatever to themselves brings good,
> Poor, undivided, reckless, scheming souls,
> Whom naught but gold, or love of self, controls;
> Who deem it pastime, and a thing of jest,
> To aim a death-blow at a savage breast,
> Sport with his pain, and laugh to *see* him die,
> And when he dies not, worse inventions try—
> Gifts—bribery—fiery draughts that burn his brain,
> And send him thirsting to his haunts again,
> A demon then, and a worse a thousand times
> For lessons learned in European crimes.
>
> (*The Island Queen*, Bk. III, pp. 37-38)

The main bulk, however, of this humanitarian verse is devoted to the miseries of the poor English labourer, industrial as well as agricultural. The author of an anonymous work, *The Factory Child* (1831), supplements his rhymes with copious footnotes in order to describe the cruelties of the Overlooker, the long hours of work,[24] children struck with straps to prevent them from falling asleep amongst the wool, accidents happening to dozing child-workers, the relentlessness of fathers who force

their fatigued children to work while they themselves spend the children's wages on gin and rum. The sad tale is told of little Mary whose father is compelled to send her to a factory in spite of his previous resolve against such a step.

> But all hand-labour now is come to nought,
> And steam performs what once by men was wrought;
> Whilst we employment seek, and seek in vain—
> Children their parents' bread must now obtain.
>
> (*The Factory Child*, p. 6)

Awakened early in the morning by her father, the tender Mary shivers in cold, cries, 'O, father, is it time?' and drops her sleepy head. When this girl grows up, she looks forward to married life which, she fondly believes, will release her from girlhood miseries but, alas, there never is an end to her sufferings. The author draws the familiar contrast between the prevalent movement for the abolition of slavery abroad, on the one hand, and callousness to child-labour at home, on the other:

> The Press—the Pulpit—Senate—and the Stage—
> Proclaim'd the Negro's griefs, and the Planter's rage:
> Whilst England's children, heavier far oppress'd.
> Rais'd not a qualm within her callous breast.
>
> (Ibid, p. 25)

In the same strain writes Eliza Cook, a self-educated poet of humble origin who became quite popular in the mid-Victorian period:

> We are busy in helping the far away slave,—
> We must cherish the Pole, for he's foreign and brave;
> Our alms-giving record is widely unrolled—
> To the east and west we send mercy and gold;
> But methinks there are those in our own famous land
> Whose thin cheeks might be fatten'd by charity's hand.
>
> (*Poems*, second series, p. 173)

'Our Father', in the third series of Eliza Cook's *Poems*, is another poem on the miseries of child-labourers, inspired by a reading of R. H. Horne's report on the subject. A number of Eliza Cook's poems express her feelings about the contemporary situation as the very titles show: 'Song of the Spirit of Gold', 'Song of the City Artisan', 'The Poor Man to His Son', 'A Song for the Workers', 'A Temperance Song', and so on. There is no speculation in Eliza Cook as to the cause and solution of social problems; she has a simple, unpretentious mind that has been moved by the situation, and without advocating any philosophical nostrum, she reflects the common man's sense of bafflement and pain at the situation. Writing under the shadow of the Chartist agitation, she addresses the people of England:

Trust not to the brawling leaders,
 Lighting ye with Fury's brand !
'Tis brain-feeders, not blood-breeders,
 That shall purify the land !

.. ..

Ask for all that should be granted !
 Show the fester of neglect;
If a People's love is wanted,
 People's Rights must have respect !

.. ..

Trust not to your brawling leaders !
 Scorn to spring with tiger claws !
'Tis truth-heeders—not steel-speeders,—
 That shall triumph in your cause.
League in firm, unflinching quiet;
 Use your presses, print and read !
If you ope the gate of Riot,
 Wives and little ones must bleed!

(*Poems*, vol. iii, 'A Song', pp. 101-105)

Eliza Cook is a representative Victorian in her insistence on non-violent revolution and on the gospel of Work:

Work, work, my boy, be not afraid,
    Look labour boldly in the face;
Take up the hammer or the spade,
    And blush not for your humble place.
        (*Poems*, vol iv, 'The Poor Man to His Son')

Let Man toil to win his living,
    Work is not a task to spurn;
Poor is gold of others' giving,
    To the silver that we earn.
.. ..
No ! for Right is up and asking
    Loudly for a fairer lot,
And Commerce must not let her tasking
    From a nation's canker spot.
        (Ibid. 'A Song for the Workers')

Like almost all her contemporaries, Eliza Cook is optimistic about the future, though it is rather a far future. Until the proper social adjustment is achieved, there must be, she believes, unstinted exercise of mercy on the part of the privileged classes and ungrudging readiness for work on the part of the working classes.

Like Eliza Cook, other poets too plead for mercy. Portia's speech on mercy forms the motto of the anonymous *Factory Child* and the author begins his versified propaganda with a paragraph on mercy. Mercy is the plea too of Mrs. Norton's anonymously published *A Voice from the Factories* (1836). In this work, dedicated to Lord Ashley, there is nothing bitter or intemperate or revolutionary. It is not labour Mrs. Norton objects to, but excessive labour, because 'Excessive labour works the SOUL'S decay':

We grant their class must labour—young and old;
We grant the child the needy parents' tool;
But still our hearts a better plan behold;
No bright Utopia of some dreaming fool,

But rationally just, and good by rule.
Not against TOIL, but TOIL's EXCESS we pray,
(Else were we nursed in Folly's simplest school).
(*A Voice from the Factories*, xxi)

That class-disparity is axiomatic in her faith is evident in her use of the first and the third persons in this passage. She is unconcerned by any hypothesis of levelling up or levelling down the classes; there must be servants where there are masters. She tries to persuade the upper classes that factory reforms are called for not on the ground of pity alone but on that of their own safety too.

the peasant, from his cradle taught
That some must *own*, while some must till the land,
Rebels not, murmurs not—even in his thought.
Born to his lot, he bows to high command.
(Ibid. liv)

Too harshly ruled, the poor man learns to hate
And curse the oppressive law that bids him serve the
Great.
(Ibid. lv)

And from the gathering of this discontent,
When there is strength, REVOLT his standard rears.
(Ibid. lvi)

Therefore should Mercy, gentle and serene,
Sit by the Ruler's side and share his throne:—
Lest due Authority be overthrown.
(Ibid. lvii)

This plea for mercy—a case of virtue naïvely made of a necessity—recurs in another work of Mrs. Norton, *The Child of the Islands* (1856), praised by the *Quarterly*.[25] Her aim here is to contrast the prospects in life of a privileged class (represented at its brightest by the Prince of Wales, the 'Child of the Islands') with the 'shadow that lies beyond and around'. There is some

creditable poetry in the descriptions of the seamstress toiling for a sapless life, the trapper in the mine, the pallid weaver at the loom, the Serpentine welcoming suicides, the Tyburn gate and gallows, homeless men and women passing nights in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, the Children's prison at Pankhurst, the death of an old pauper. Interesting too is the contrast that a lady of fashion institutes between her own class and the class beneath:

> A life of self-indulgence is for US,
> A life of self-denial is for them;
> For US the streets, broad-built and populous,
> For them unhealthy corners, garrets dim,
> And cellars where the water-rat may swim!
> For US, green paths refreshed by frequent rain,
> For them, dark alleys where the dust lies grim:
> Not doomed by US to this appointed pain,—
> God made us, Rich and Poor—of what do these complain?
> (*The Child of the Islands*, II, xxix)

This passage, used by Mrs. Gaskell for the motto of the ninth chapter of *Mary Barton*, repeats the old contraposition between 'US' and 'THEM'. To these self-complaisant sentiments of the privileged classes, Mrs. Norton adds the average citizen's passive reaction to the suffering of the poor.

> WHAT CAN I DO? I know that men have died
> Of their privations; truly, I believe
> That honest labour may be vainly plied:
> But how am I his sorrow to relieve?
> Go, let our Rulers some great plan achieve,
> It rests with These to settle and command,—
> We, meaner souls, can only sigh and grieve.
> (Ibid. IV, liv)

In this work as in the previous, Mrs. Norton prefers progressive

amelioration of social miseries to revolution. She raises no fundamental questions, her sole plea is that of mercy:

> The GRADUAL is God's law. And we all fail
> Because we will not copy it, but would
> Against deep-rooted obstacles prevail,
> (Which have the change of centuries withstood)
> By hurried snatching in our rashest mood.
> (Ibid. IV, lvii)

The Rich-and-Poor theme enters F. H. Doyle's *The Two Destinies* (1844) by way of a rare outburst of personal feeling that is characteristic of the author's cultured and humane temper pained by the iniquities of social conditions.

> All civilizing arts we boast,
> Enlargement of the human mind—
> Science, and wealth, and taste refined;
> What does the vaunted progress cost?
> Alas for earth, if this great gain
> Have its foundations laid in pain—
> Pain of the poor, who suffer still,
> Let the world brighten as it will.
> .. .. ..
> What are these poor? to pain consign'd—
> Do they, or who, make up mankind?
> Was it for others? or for them,
> That Christ laid down his diadem?
> This world has riddles hard and old—
> Old as itself—not mine the power.
> Still it is well, from hour to hour,
> To keep them clear in view and know
> How blessedness contrasts with woe—
> How some are ever breathing here
> A bright and balmy atmosphere,
> Whilst others, through unbroken gloom,
> Unheeded falter to the tomb.
> (*The Two Destinies*, pp. 19-20)

Doyle's position in this poem is purely that of the humanitarian. He does not theorize on the problem of poverty; he does not mention revolution or natural law, nor does he indulge in diatribes against this or that school of political thinkers. The anomaly of increasing national wealth in the midst of the worsening misery of the people to which Doyle urbanely draws the reader's attention, is bluntly stated by another poet.

> What boots it to us that our country is rich?
> The best of our life-time is spent in a ditch.
> We know she is powerful—she tramples us down,
> And plentiful too—though our bread is so brown.
>
> (*The Village Poor-House*, III, ii)

James White, the author of *The Village Poor-House* (1832), employs the technique of juxtaposed pictures of the rich and the poor to emphasize the disparity of social classes, and he does so more often and sometimes to better effect than F. H. Doyle or Mrs. Norton. His frequent use of innuendo, irony and epigram leaves us in no doubt about his own sympathies. The village of his poems is, as it were, the microcosm of English society in which the gentry live apart from and hostile to the common people. A different treatment of rural life—less ironical, more sympathetic—occurs in Mrs. Ellis's verse-tale, *The Sons of the Soil* (1840). This is a story in twelve books but, as Mrs. Ellis takes care to point out in the preface, 'the story is adventitious, and has arisen out of the popular evils of the day.' The poet's principal thesis is that the relation between landlord and farmer has debased into one of give and take of rent; it is entirely a mercenary relation, unenlivened by human and personal considerations, and all this debasement arises from a spirit of avarice that is abroad.

One of the most ancient of human passions, gold-lust assumed peculiar intensity in Britain during this period of commercial expansion, if we judge by literary references to it. When the

hero of 'Locksley Hall' cried that 'Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden keys,' he epigrammatized a common feeling of the day. The *Athenaeum*[26], for instance, regarded as promising the theme of 'scrip fever which is burning through all the veins and throbbing at all the pulses of society,' a theme developed by Peter Placid, the pseudonymous author of *The twenty-first of October: or the Heroes of the Day* (1845):

> There is a fever on men's minds: the Lust
> Of Gold hath, like a shrewish despot, thrust
> All decency, all reason, out of sight.
>
> (*The twenty-first of October &c.*, V)

Ebenezer Jones has two poems on the theme, 'Song of the Gold Getters' and 'Song of the Kings of Gold', and the second is the lyrical expression of a fiercely embittered imagination.

> The earth, the earth, is ours!
> Its corn, its fruits, its wine,
> Its sun, its rain, its flowers,
> Ours, all, all!—cannot shine
> One sunlight ray, but where
> Our mighty titles hold;
> Wherever life is, there
> Possess the Kings of Gold.
>
> (*Chorus*) We cannot count our slaves,
> Nothing bounds our sway,
> Our will destroys and saves,
> We let, we create, we slay,
> Ha! ha! who are Gods?
>
> .. .. ..
>
> The father writhes a smile,
> As we seize his red-lipped girl,
> His white-loined wife; aye, while
> Fierce millions burn, to hurl
> Rocks on our regal brows,

Knives in our hearts hold—
They pale, prepare them bows
At the step of the Kings of Gold.

(*Chorus*) We cannot count our slaves,
Nothing bounds our sway,
Our will destroys and saves,
We let, we create, we slay.
Ha! ha! who are Gods?
(*Studies of Sensation and Event*)

A lesser poet but better known than Ebenezer Jones, Charles Swain declaims against contemporary Mammon-worship:

Shame upon this Mammon-worship! Shame upon this lucre-love
.. .. ..
Out upon this rage for riches, striving up and strutting bold,
Out upon this craft which teaches scorn of everything but gold:
Out upon the slavish minions, vain disciples of a creed
Which believes in God, yet never acts as if it thus believes.
(*Dramatic Chapters, Poems and Songs*, pp. 200–202)

On the aetiology of Mammonism in contemporary society, opinions varied widely. Consequently, verse reactions to the phenomenon also varied from pietistic platitudes to radical anger and from the latter to liberalist complaisance. Of this last attitude, a good representative was Charles Mackay whose commonplace mind was matched to a knack of producing smooth and pleasant verse. His friend Angus Bethune Reach had the foolhardiness to declare that 'The Charles Mackays and Thomas Hoods..tread on better and steadier ground than the Tennysons and Brownings.'[27] Connected with the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Daily News*, Mackay believed that liberalism

was ushering in a new era of civilization, an era of which the responsibilities required an earnest spirit in the poet. No one has iterated in verse the idea of Progress oftener than Mackay. In 'Una Fata Morgana' (*Voices from the Crowd*, 1846), he speaks of 'that great cause, the nearest to my mind, Progress'. In 'The Three Preachers' of the same volume, the first preacher advises presumptuous man to go back; the second asks man to stand still, while the third comes out with the exhortation:

> Forward: ye deluded nations,
> Progress is the rule of all:—
> Man was made for healthful effort;
> Tyranny has crush'd him long;
> He shall march from good to better,
> And do battle with the wrong.

In 'Old Opinions', the refrain goes thus:

> Old Opinions! rags and tatters!
> Get you gone: get you gone!

What are these ragged opinions that must go?—They are that man was born evil and the earth was dark and joyless at best; that human sorrows were predestined to endure; that kings were holy and the Church was the Lord of Conscience; that Freedom was the enemy of Peace, Law, Virtue, Magistrate, and King; that Education was a luxury for the few; that it was right to foster antagonism between nation and nation. Mackay whose social philosophy is a curious combination of the teachings of Carlyle and Macaulay, has no patience with the political economist, the Benthamist, or the clergyman. Indeed, he roundly scolds the Benthamist legislator:

> A disciple in a science
> Sprung of selfishness and scorn;
> That considers Earth too scanty,
> For its people and would treat

Every poor man as a foe-man,
  If the wretch made bold to eat—
Vilest culprit, if he married,
  Till his corn and wine were sure,—
Life itself a shameful error
  In the children of the poor.

(*Voices from the Crowd*, 'The Clairvoyante')

Even as Distribution must be fair, there must be *laissez-aller* in Production:

What do we want? Our daily bread;
  Leave to earn it by our skill:
Leave to labour freely for it,
  Leave to buy it where we will:
For 'tis hard upon the many,
Hard—unpitied by the few,
To starve and die for want of work,
  Or, live half-starved, with work to do.

(Ibid. 'The Wants of the People')

A necessary concomitant of this anti-restrictive view of economic life is belief in Work of which Mackay is a fervent exponent:

No! let us work! we only ask
Reward proportioned to our task:—
  We have no quarrel with the great,
    No feud with rank—
    With mill or bank—
  No envy of a lord's estate.
If we can earn sufficient store
  To satisfy our daily need;
    And can retain,
    For age and pain,
  A fraction, we are rich indeed.

(Ibid. 'Daily Work')

Life planned according to these views, so thought this hopeful

and amiable Early Victorian, would eliminate all possibilities of war, that barbarian wickedness into which self-aggrandizing individuals have led nations.

> Oh, foolish men ! to draw the cumbrous car,
> Of kings and chiefs, and potentates to war,
> To waste your lives, and give your roofs to flame,
> Your babes to slaughter and your wives to shame,
> And all to aid the tyrant of an hour,
> To round a province and expand his power.
> (Charles Mackay, *The Hope of the World*, p. 9)

Since there is no rational cause of antagonism between men and men, and although the momentum of primitive selfishness urges men to fight and to suffer, the panacea for this evil is education. Mackay is a representative of his age in his profound faith in education:

> Go forth ! ye friends and lovers of your kind!
> Traverse the world from Labrador to Ind,
> .. ..
> Teach ! teach the world ! and all its mental night
> Shall melt away in the fulness of the light;
> (Ibid. pp. 44-45)

Therefore Mackay remains an optimist. Things may not be at the moment all that one would desire them to be, but the future, one is assured, is clear and bright.

> No—the Present, though clouds o'er her countenance roll,
> Has a light in her eyes, and a hope in her soul.
> (*Voices from the Crowd*, 'The Days that are gone')

VII

Of the Early Victorian poets of the contemporary social ferment, we have so far considered only the minor writers, some of them very minor indeed. Many of these verse-writers are nevermore heard of; quite a few of them publish their works anonymously; some of them, however, like Thomas Wade and F. H. Doyle, have strayed into the field of social ferment for a short while only. On the other hand, the place that Ebenezer Elliott has in the history of nineteenth century poetry is on account of his radical verse while his other works like *The Village Patriarch, Love, and other Poems* (1834) and *Kerhonah, The Vernal Walk, Win Hill, and other Poems* (1835) have been wholly forgotten. The large quantity of this minor verse—we have selected only a fraction of it here—proves how strongly and widely the poetical conscience of the period was stirred by the social unrest. But the largeness of the quantity scarcely conceals the poverty of the quality. If the obvious reason for this poverty of the poetry be the incompetence of the poets themselves (which is undeniable), it becomes necessary to review the relevant works of the major poets. 'A man born in 1810', says G. M. Young, 'entered manhood with the ground rocking under his feet as it had rocked in 1789.'[28] As though anticipating these words of the later historian, an anonymous column-writer of the *Athenaeum* wrote in 1832:

> No man can expect to read a large work leisurely through, when the very ground under his feet seems to have a touch of the earthquake, and high houses threaten to topple down and crush ordinary people in the rubbish.
>
> (*The Athenaeum*, 1832,p. 755)

How did the major poets react to this social commotion which, by all accounts, those of the minor and obscure poets as well as of historians, was of inescapable import in the period? Were Tennyson, Browning and Matthew Arnold stirred at all by the commotion? And, if they were, has their response formed any substantial and worthy part of their poetry? For the student of poetry, the question that ultimately matters does not concern the nature of the political or social ideology that the poets may believe in—although our knowledge of their ideology should contribute to our understanding of their poetry—but relates to the quality of the poetry. As the substance of poetry, one ideology may be as good as another; the aesthetic validity of the ideology is in its power to stimulate the creative vision. To what extent did the contemporary social ferment serve as a potent and productive stimulus for the poetic imagination of the major Early Victorian writers?

VIII

Tennyson, for example, was fully alive to the movements of his time. He was among the young Cambridge supporters of the Anti-Slavery Convention; he was an interested witness of farm-fires; he had 'an earnest desire to do something to help those who lived in misery'; he was actively involved in the luckless Torrijos affair; delighted with the passing of the Reform Bill, he rang the church bells wildly at night to the consternation of the parson; he and his Cambridge friends discussed the principles of current events.[29] Among his early poems, 'The Statesman' and 'The Goose' are records of his observation of class-cleavage in society. Some unpublished lines of Tennyson occurring in William Allingham's diary echo the opinions that we have already met with in the works of the minor writers:

> The rich wed richer, and the poor the poor,
> The mount of gold accumulating still,
> The gulf of want enlarging, deepening, till
> The one into the other sink at last
> With all confusion:
>
> (William Allingham, *A Diary*, p. 303)

Tennyson is ill at ease on account of the social scene. He would invite a change since change is in accordance with the law of Nature:

> For Nature also, cold and warm,
> And moist and dry, devising long,
> Through many agents making strong,
> Matures the individual form.

Meet is it change should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.
.. ..
Regard gradation, lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind.
('Love thou thy land')

The use of the word 'gradation' in this context brings Tennyson into line with Disraeli and Mrs. Norton, their view of society being in principle the same. Like them, Tennyson draws lessons of social philosophy from observations of Nature. Like them he believes that social change is to be brought about by the wise guidance of the Statesman, not by popular revolution, not by blood and 'hoar anarchies' which he mentions in 'The Poet'. Of 'the herd', Tennyson has deep distrust. As even his earliest poetry shows, he had found nothing in popular revolution

Save the blind impulse of the brutal zeal
Which urges the mad populace to vent
Upon the breathless dead that cannot feel,
The fury of their senseless chastisement.
(*Poems by Two Brothers*, p. 232)

The attitude runs through expressions in early poetry like 'the braggart shout for some blind glimpse of freedom work itself thro' madness', 'a noise of hands that disarrange the social engine', to the 'red fool fury of the Seine' and other phrases of his mature poetry. And along with the mob, the mob-leader too comes under the poet's disfavour. Tennyson deprecates the 'loud lies of the time' and 'the shallow fret and frothy fume of brass-mouthed demagogues, O'Connell, Hume', and exclaims with Miltonic solemnity:

Woe to the double-tongued, the land's disease,
Lords of the hustings, whose mob-rhetoric rends
The ears of Truth ! .. ..

.. ..

Those that inflame themselves with idle words
In every market-place. Their doom is signed,
Tho' they shall cause confusion and the storms
Of civil blood—Moths, cankers, palmer-worms
That gnaw the bud, blind leaders of the blind.
(*Unpublished Early Poems*, p. 62)

Since mob-rhetoric rends the ears of Truth, the poet must have no truck with the leaders who mislead. He will, on the contrary, use his rhyme as a hammer to break the tricks of time-serving agitators:

Wherever evil customs thicken
Break thro' with the hammer of iron rhyme,
Till priest-craft and king-craft sicken,
But pap-meat-pamper not the time
With the flock of the thunder-stricken.
If the world caterwaul, lay harder upon her
Till she clapperclaw no longer,
Bang thy stithy stronger, and stronger
Thy rhyme-hammer *shall* have honour.
(Ibid. p. 97)

It is a pity that Tennyson abandoned this style of writing that testifies to a virility in surprising contrast to the polished effeminacy of the bulk of his poetry. With Tennyson, the pivot of the social wheel is the ideal Statesman (perhaps Arthur Hallam, if he had lived) who would not 'pamper a hasty time' nor feed 'with crude imaginings the herd'; who would work according to 'innovation grade by grade'; who would neither cling to some ancient saw nor allow himself to be mastered by some modern term; who would be above hollow verbalism of all kinds. Under this all-judging and benevolent authoritarianism, there must be no interference with individual liberty. Should individual freedom be stifled by banded unions, Tennyson says in 'You ask me, why', he would rather migrate

to 'the palms and temples of the South'. Two common motifs of the poetry of social ferment—trade unions and emigration—have been woven along with others in this poem. If the fundamental principles of statecraft and social organization be fulfilled, principles that recognize individual liberty in co-existence with benevolent authoritarianism, organization that assumes a hierarchical society based on justice and harmony, Tennyson would look forward joyously to a time beyond the fear of change and the conflict between the Haves and the Have-nots, beyond the controversy of the Corn-Laws, to the golden year

> When wealth no more shall rest in mounded heaps,
> But smit with freer light shall slowly melt
> In many streams to fatten lower lands,
> And light shall spread.
>
> ('The Golden Year')

Like Leonard of 'The Golden Year', Tennyson sometimes feels he is 'a tongue-tied Poet in the feverous days', and on one occasion, he writes:

> Oh, what care I how many a fluke
> Sticks in the liver of the time?
> I cannot prate against the Duke,
> I love to have an idle rhyme.
> .. ..
> For, though she [the Muse] has her hopes and fears,
> She dwells not on a single page,
> But thrids the annals of the years,
> And runs her eye from age to age.
> What's near is large to modern eyes,
> But disproportions fade away
> Lower'd in the sleepy pits where lies
> The dropsied Epos of the day.
>
> (*Unpublished Early Poems*, 'An Idle Rhyme')

The idea of the vastness of time and space deeply stirred the

imagination of Tennyson. In a letter to Emily Sellwood, written in 1839, he writes: 'The far future has been my world always.'[30]

A deeply significant statement this. The far future was Tennyson's world in regard to social and political movements as well. As he conceived it, his function as a poet was to instil into his readers an awareness of the essential requirements of the age. Hallam Tennyson quotes from a letter written to his father in 1835 by G. S. Venables:

> The modern artist has hardly ever found ... objects of high imagination and intense popular feeling for his art to work upon. If, wrote Venables, in a contemporary letter to my father, an artist could now find out where these objects are, he would be *the* artist of modern times. Venables affirmed they were not to be sought in transient fashions of thought, but in the 'convergent tendencies of many opinions' on religion, art and nature,—of which tendencies he and others believed, he said, my father, with his commanding intellect, and conspicuous moral courage, ought to be the artistic exponent and unifier.
>
> (*Tennyson, A Memoir*, i, 123)

Tennyson brooded over the requirements of the age and found that the age could best be served by those who would project their vision beyond the age. He would consider the 'vast eddies in the flood of onward time'; he would 'contemplate all this work of Time, the giant labouring in his youth'; he would merge his 'private sorrow's barren song' into the 'larger hope' for mankind; he must maintain that 'what's near is large to modern eyes, but disproportions fade away'. And in assuming such a far-stretching, visionary view of things, Tennyson advisedly refuses to overrate the meaning of the contemporary social unrest. His aim is to penetrate through the dust and cobwebs of passing events to vigorous and stable principles; he must not cramp his heart by taking those 'half-views of men and things' which are, he says in 'Will Waterproof's Mono-

logue', the consequence of party-politics.—This is a judicial and unimpassioned reaction to the social situation which prefers principles to events. The social unrest, as such, fails to lend substance to Tennyson's poetry, and almost the only significant contribution of his consciousness of the unrest to his poetry is the hungry lion image in 'Locksley Hall', an image that came to him from a minor contemporary, Thomas Pringle.[31]

IX

Browning, as a lad, came under the influence of Voltaire and Shelley. In early youth, he associated with the radical W. J. Fox. Apart from the possibility that his socio-political views might have been influenced by others, Browning's own intellectual curiosity should presumably have turned his thoughts to the contemporary social unrest. His early letters, few as they are, show practically no interest in social conditions; there are slight references to the Corn-Laws, to 'the fierce political reality'—a reference to the Chartist agitation—to Carlyle's radicalism, and to Peel's turning into a Liberal.[32] Browning's first work, *Pauline*, has nothing to do with social questions, nor has *Paracelsus*, although in this story of the chequered career of an aspiring soul, we note the emergence of that humanitarianism which presently becomes a dominant and recurrent theme of his early works. The question of the rights of the common people attracts Browning's speculative mind and during the ten years after the publication of *Paracelsus* (years during which social conditions in England are exceptionally disturbed), Browning dwells upon the question in a series of works, chiefly the plays. The clearest testimony, however, of his intense interest in the contemporary social misery occurs in *Sordello*. Sympathy for suffering humanity is indeed the keystone of the Browningian version of the troubadour's story. When in 1837, Browning's composition of the poem reached an *impasse* and he went on his first Italian tour, he was inspired to a revitalized conception of the work because of this sympathy. In the personal digression of the third book, Browning speaks of his musings in Venice. Where is she who can be an inspiring queen to his unfinished poem?—

This busy Bassanese, that twinkling woman of Asolo, that Paduan girl? The poet cannot make a choice. Meanwhile, a miserable beggar-woman plucks at his garment, and he who till lately has complaisantly believed that happiness is everyone's portion except of 'a luckless residue we send to crouch in corners out of sight', now finds himself overwhelmed by a representative of that residue. In this beggar-woman, Browning finds a symbol and a source of inspiration, an inspiring symbol that will inject vitality into his moribund verse-narrative. It is she, Browning decides, this Mater Dolorosa, this beggar-representative of the 'warped souls and bodies' of suffering humanity who will be the ravishing genius of his poem:

> I call you ravishing, for I regret
> Little that she, whose early feet was set
> Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,
> Now, i'the silent city, seems to fall
> Towards me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest
> To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
> Dry of their tears upon my bosom.
>
> (*Sordello*, III, 773-79)

The woman-symbol of his early vision, the splendid queen standing on a pedestal, has changed now into the queen of sorrow. So deeply impressed is Browning by his experiences of the misery of common people and so strongly does he come to believe in the poet's social responsibility that, using the image of the Israelites in the wilderness, he denounces those poets who think it fit to sing frivolous madrigals while the people suffer. In 1837, how to wind up the story of Sordello was Browning's quandary; his Italian tour, increasing his sensitiveness to poverty and social iniquities, provided him with a solution in the conception of the troubadour as a champion of the oppressed and the miserable. Observing the crowd in the streets of Ferrara, Sordello realizes that society is divided

into two classes—the few, the tall, prodigious pines, and the many:

> a throng
> Of shrubs he saw—a nameless common sort
> O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
> And hurried into corners.
>
> (*Sordello*, IV, 212-15)

He is startled by 'the faint remainder of some worn-out smile' of this common sort,

> startling all the more, that these
> Seemed passive and disposed of, and uncared for.
>
> (Ibid. IV, 228-29)

But this social injustice cannot continue long:

> And yet the people grew, the people grew,
> Grew ever.
>
> (Ibid. IV, 281-19)

Sordello resolves to work for the service of humanity, for the restoration of their rights to the deprived many:

> First a mighty equilibrium, sure,
> Should he establish, privilege procure
> For all, the few had long possessed !
>
> (Ibid. IV, 261-63)

But how precisely is he to begin his service? He cannot work alone. He will not be allowed to work alone in a country where social life is convulsed with the antagonism of two parties. Whom should he support—the Guelfs or the Ghibellines? Sordello ponders much as an earnest Early Victorian—for that matter, Browning himself—might weigh between the Tories and the Liberals. 'Rome's the Cause !', decides Sordello. And Rome for the medieval Christian, symbolized the ideal of an integrated spiritual and secular life above the selfish passions of mere partisanship.

Sordello does not live to fulfil his ideal. He dies under the stress of the tumultuous mental self-assessment which is imposed on him by the unexpected revelation of the mystery of his birth. Before he dies, he asserts the rights of common humanity, the collectivist ideal of social evolution—'that collective man outstrips the individual'[33]—and the poet's rightful status as the natural leader of the people.

Far more analytical than Tennyson in his socio-political philosophy, Browning is like Tennyson in his search for principles transcending party-interests. The non-partisan nature of his politics comes out in a sonnet published in 1885:

> Little do or can the best of us:
> That little is achieved through Liberty.
> Who, then, dares hold—emancipated thus—
> His fellow shall continue bound ? Not I
> Who live, love, labour freely, nor discuss
> A brother's right to freedom. That is 'Why'.
>
> (*New Poems*, 'Why I am a Liberal', p. 54)

Browning is carried by his zeal for principles so far as to relate the problems of poverty and social justice to the rarefied metaphysical problems of Evil, Failure, and the interrelation between the Body and the Soul. It is also remarkable that though Browning's humanitarianism sprang presumably from his experiences of English conditions, it is non-English setting and character that stimulate his poetic thoughts on social questions. He is shocked by the 'sad dishevelled ghost' of suffering humanity in Venice, not anywhere in England. Pippa, the only factory girl in his poetry, is an Italian though there was no dearth of forlorn factory girls in England.

X

Elizabeth Barrett, cooped up in her invalid's room, maintained an amazingly lively interest in the conditions and events of the world outside and made liberal use of this interest in her works. Her early poems testify to a vague liberalism. 'The Appeal' in *Poems* (1833) thus exhorts the children of England:

> Are ye men, and love not man ?
> Love ye, and permit his ban ?
> Can ye, dare ye rend the chain
> Wrought of common joy and pain,
> Clasping with its links of gold ?
> Man to man in one strong hold ?

Presently, she comes to learn in greater details of the realities of social miseries: an early evidence of this new knowledge can be found in 'The Soul's Travelling' of *The Seraphim* volume of 1838 in which the second section presents a jumbled picture of a street-scene with its thronged contrasts of the rich man and the whining beggar, the silk-dressed lady and the street-sweeper, the businessman and the cabman. From R. H. Horne she learnt of child-labour and wrote the 'Cry of the Children', a poem of great propaganda value which earned her the admiration of the Anti-Corn Law League. In one of her letters, she calls herself a '(magna) Chartist', indicating her sympathies with the Chartist Movement. Contrast between the increasing wealth of the few and the misery of the many is the theme of 'The Cry of the Human':

> The curse of gold upon the land
> The lack of bread enforces;
> The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,

Like more of Death's White Horses
The rich preach 'rights' and 'future days'
And hear no angel scoffing,
The poor die mute, with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing,
Be pitiful, O God !

Her humanitarian sympathies find expression in several passages of *Casa Guidi Windows*. Reviewing the pomp and splendour of the Crystal Palace, she asks the liberal nations, have they

no light
Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor
Who sit in darkness when it is not night ?
No cure for wicked children ? Christ,—no cure !
No help for women sobbing out of sight
Because men made the laws ? no brother-lure
Burnt out by popular lightnings ? Hast thou found
No remedy, my England ? for such woes ?
(*Casa Guidi Windows*, II, 634-41)

From these occasional outpourings of passionate sympathy, Mrs. Browning passes on to a sustained expression in *Aurora Leigh* of her ideas on social questions. The two main themes of this novel-poem are love and social service. Romney Leigh is a Christian Socialist who finds the world 'half brutalised with a civilisation' and cries:

The world's hard pressed:
The sweat of labour in the early curse
Has (turning acrid in six thousand years)
Become the seat of torture....
(*Aurora Leigh*, II, 165-68)

And rich men make the poor, who curse the rich,
Who agonise together, rich and poor,
Under and over, in the social spasm.
(Ibid. II, 271-73)

> Who
> Being man, Aurora, can stand calmly by
> And view these things, and never tease his soul
> For some great cure ?
>
> (Ibid. II, 279-82)

Romney Leigh teases his soul for a great cure, a comprehensive plan of life that will remove social ills and will also re-direct mankind to the way of Christ. He finds that

> the tyrannous sword,
> Which pierced Christ's heart, has cleft the world in twain
> 'Twixt class and class, opposing rich to poor,
>
> (Ibid. IV, 122-24)

Romney has beheld the world 'as one great famishing carnivorous mouth'[34]; he has been 'distracted with the cries of tortured prisoners in the polished brass of that Phalarion bull, society', he has suffered in his efforts to remove the evils of society and has at last come to believe that socialism and quick revolution cannot succeed. The eighth and the ninth books present lengthy arguments on the social situation and social philosophies and the reader should not be left in any doubt about Mrs. Browning's final position. That her personal opinions have been liberally introduced in this verse-narrative has been admitted by herself:

> I have put much of myself in it—I mean to say, of my soul, my thoughts, emotions, opinions; in other respects, there is not a personal line, of course.
>
> (*Letters of E. B. Browning*, ii, 228)

In the letters, she states her social ideals in clear language:

> Fixed principles, either of opinion or action, seem clearly gone out of the world. The principle of Destruction is in the place of the principle of Re-integration or of Radical Reform.
>
> (Ibid. i, 389)

> Really we are not communists, farther than to admit the wisdom of voluntary association in matters of material life among the poorer classes....I would have the government educate the people absolutely and *then* give room for the individual to develop himself into life freely.
>
> (Ibid. i, 363)

As Aurora Leigh understands it, and as Mrs. Browning too understands it, the real trouble with the world is that it has no faith in spiritual values—'materialist the age's name is'.[35] Basically mistaken are those who understand 'our natural world too insularly, as if no spiritual counterpart completed it, consummating its meaning.' Aurora is wise when she says:

> It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's breadth off
> The dust of the actual,—Ah, your Fouriers failed,
> Because not poets enough to understand
> That life develops from within.
>
> (*Aurora Leigh*, II, 482-85)

At the end of the story, Romney accepts Aurora's wisdom:

> Fourier's void,
> And Comte absurd,—and Cabet puerile.
> Subsist no rules of life outside of life,
> No perfect manners without Christian souls.
>
> (Ibid. IX, 868-71)

In plain words, man doth not live by bread alone. The social worker is asked to realize that merely catering to the material well-being of the poor leaves the problem unsolved. Secondly, when we have recognized the spiritual counterpart of the natural world, we must necessarily take the individual soul into account. The usual error of the social worker is that in his zeal for collective justice to the poor, he forgets the individual, whereas in a healthy administrative system there must be equipoise in the relations between the individual and the society.

> Genuine government
> Is but the expression of a nation, good
> Or less good—even as all society,
> Howe'er unequal, monstrous, crazed and cursed,
> Is but the expression of men's single lives,
> The loud sum of the silent units.
>
> (Ibid. VIII, 873-78)

A further error of the social worker lies in his belief in 'this or that quack nostrum',[36] he develops an inelastic, doctrinaire mind. Success comes to the worker who works quietly, patiently, remembering the importance of the individual soul.

> We want more quiet in our works,
> More knowledge of the bounds in which we work;
> More knowledge that each individual man
> Remains an Adam to the general race.
>
> (Ibid. VIII, 852-55)

After being tossed rudely in the storm of unstable ideologies, Romney Leigh at last finds his haven in his knowledge of the integrality of love and service—'let us love so well, our work shall still be better for our work, and both commended, for the sake of each, by all true workers and true lovers born.'[37] Aurora will 'blow all class-walls level as Jericho's past Jordan' so that all souls that hear her call shall get 'to some purer eminence than any hitherto beheld for clouds', and shall also realize 'how by mounting ever we attain, and so climb on.' Romney's last words—words that are equivalent to the poet's verdict—are:

> The world's old,
> But the old world waits the time to be renewed,
> Toward which, new hearts in individual growth
> Must quicken, and increase to multitude
> In new dynasties of the race of men;

Developed whence, shall grow spontaneously
New churches, new economies, new laws
Admitting freedom, new societies
Excluding falsehood.

(Ibid. IX, 941-49)

Mrs. Browning thought deeply and earnestly over social problems. More than any other poet of her age, she recognized the possibilities of the social situation as a theme of poetry. Her lyrics on particular social evils are among the best and the most effective of the kind. She alone among the major poets of the period, produced a sustained work on the many-sided social situation, and if the work leaves the impression of an academic endeavour somewhat at variance with the realities, the cause of the deficiency lies in the peculiar circumstances of her life rather than in her artistic integrity and moral intelligence.

A. H. Clough calls himself the 'Apostle of anti-laissez-faire'[38], and writes sarcastically in 'In the Great Metropolis':

Each for himself is still the rule:
We learn it when we go to school—
The devil take the hindmost, O !

Clough's letters show a more acute and consistent response to the contemporary social and political situation than those of any other major Victorian poet. To his friend, Burbidge, he writes in 1844:

I do believe that he [the labourer] has not his proper proportion, that capital tyrannises over labour, and that Government is bound to interfere to prevent such bullying; and I do believe, too, that in some way or other the problem now solved by universal competition or the-devil-take-the-hindmost may receive a more satisfactory solution. It is manifestly absurd that, to allow me to get my stockings a halfpenny a pair cheaper, the operative stocking-weaver should be forced to go barefoot,

(*Poems and Prose Remains*, i, 91)

The perplexity which distinguishes Clough's poetry is derived no less from his social consciousness than the religious. With a feeling heart Dipsychus exclaims :

> How shall I laugh and sing and dance ?
> My every heart recoils,
> While here to give my mirth a chance
> A hungry brother toils.
>
> (Ibid. ii, 133)

To which the Mocking Spirit replies:

> This world is very odd we see,
> We do not comprehend it;
> But in one fact we all agree,
> God won't, and we can't mend it.
> Being common sense, it can't be sin
> To take it as I find it;
> The pleasure to take pleasure in;
> The pain try not to mind it.
>
> (Ibid. ii, 134)

Clough's analyses of the contemporary social situation are always liberal and unorthodox, and it is possible to gather the impression from his writings that if he had lived longer or if he had been born at a slightly later date, he might have developed into a socialist. As it is, his generous and sensitive spirit, his connection with Florence Nightingale, and his scepticism about many prevalent social philosophies force him to recognize only one kind of social principle possible in the contemporary situation, viz. service. Most other principles are liable to question. In a review-essay, Clough offers some significant statements :

> The crying evil, as it appears to us, of the present system of unrestricted competition, is not so much the distress of the workmen as the extreme slovenliness and badness of their work. The joy and satisfaction of making really good things is destroyed by

the criminal eagerness to make them to suit the market. The love of art, which, quite as much as virtue, is its own reward, used in the old times to penetrate down as far as to the meanest manufacture....With us, on the contrary, the miserable truckling to the bad taste of the multitude has gradually stolen up into the very regions of the highest art....

So far as co-operative societies or guilds would remove this evil, they would be of great use. But let it not be forgotten that the object of human society is not the mere culinary one of securing equal apportionments of meat and drink to all of its members. Men combine for some higher object; and to that higher object it is, in their social capacity, the *privilege* and real happiness of individuals to sacrifice themselves. The highest political watch-word is not Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, nor yet Solidarity but *Service.*

(Ibid. i, 416)

The attitude in the first paragraph of the extract quoted might be Ruskin's or Morris's; the attitude in the second is that of Mrs. Browning minus her emotional eagerness. Clough has incorporated the views of Florence Nightingale within his framework of rational analysis.

He seemed to have reached some more or less stable notions towards the end of his life, judging by some of the prose works and later letters, but the poems testify to his perplexity and, because of the perplexity, ubiquitous banter. In *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, the poet Philip Hewson, a hot Radical, a Chartist, argues with the tutor Adam on the question of Equality. To Adam's contention that however noble the dream of Equality, Equality reigns nowhere in the world, Philip raps out :

Ah, replied Philip, Alas ! the noted phrase of the Prayer-book,
Doing our duty in that state of life to which God has called us,
Seems to me always to mean, when the little rich boy says it,

Standing in velvet frock by mamma's brocaded flounces,
Eyeing her gold-fastened book and the watch and chain
at her bosom,
Seems to me always to mean, Eat, drink, and never mind
others.
(A. H. Clough, *Poems*, p. 221)

It is a hit simultaneously at the rich-and-poor hiatus and the prevalent subservience of religion to the vested interests of society. Philip's disillusion about the social reality breeds scorn in his soul, and he writes ironically:

Often I find myself saying, and knownot myself as I say it,
What of the poor and the weary ? their labour and pain is
needed.
Perish the poor and the weary ! what can they better than
perish,
Perish in their labour for her, who is worth the destruction
of empires ?
.. ..
Dig in thy dark prison, O miner ! and finding be thankful;
Though unpolished by thee, unto thee unseen in perfec-
tion,

While thou art eating black bread in the poisonous air of
thy cavern,
Far away glitters the gem on the peerless neck of a Princess.
Dig, and starve, and be thankful; it is so, and thou hast been
aiding.
.. ..
Yea, what is more, be rich, O ye rich ! be sublime in great
houses,
Purple and delicate linen endure; be of Burgundy patient;
Suffer that service be done to you, permit of the page and
the valet,
Vex not your souls with annoyance of charity schools or
of districts,

Cast not to the swine of the stye the pearls that should
gleam in your foreheads.
(Ibid. pp.253-54)

And yet the upshot of all this fret and banter is a defeatist escape to the antipodes. Philip marries Elspie, goes over to New Zealand, and settles down in that new country away from 'the whole great wicked artificial civilised fabric'. Philip's flight from the closed air of Europe's civilization symbolizes a typical Victorian attitude. In the lover of Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall', in the duchess of Browning's 'Flight of the Duchess', in the personal lives of E. J. Trelawny and R. H. Horne, we have evidences of that modern preference of the simple and the primitive to the complex and the civilized, a preference that has continued from the Victorian period to our own times through Paul Gauguin, D. H. Lawrence, and the warped tropical characters of Somerset Maugham.

The intellectual's puzzlement at the social tangle, typified in Philip Hewson, is shown too in an incipient form in Claude of *Amours de Voyage*, Claude who neither meddles nor makes in politics, whose sensitive nature nevertheless makes him throbbingly aware of the people's miseries.

In his poems, Clough reaches no conclusion about the social muddle. The social situation no less than the religious is responsible for the crumbling down of many of the intellectual and moral verities that he had received from tradition. It is because his attitude well represents the attitude of a sensitive section of the bourgeoisie of the times and because he is one of the few abler writers to introduce the contemporary social situation in sustained works that Clough is of considerable interest to the student of the social ferment of the Early Victorian period.

It is not surprising that Matthew Arnold who afterwards grew into a tireless and powerful social critic, should show in

his letters a continued interest in the social scene. He is convinced that 'the hour of the hereditary peerage and eldest sonship and immense properties' has struck; on one occasion, he is tempted to engage in some political writing; he sympathizes with the Chartists though he would be sorry to live under their government.[39] The two sonnets entitled 'To A Republican Friend 1848' give vent to his 'sadness at the long heart-wasting show' and bespeak his distrust of quick, revolutionary change.

> Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,
> When, bursting through the network superposed
> By selfish occupation—plot and plan,
> Lust, avarice, envy—liberated man,
> All difference with his fellow man composed,
> Shall be left standing face to face with God.

Arnold's direct utterances in poetry on the social situation are few though spread over the whole of his productive period. The early 'Horatian Echo' speaks of 'the engine-work of state' and 'the rights of man'; the late sonnet 'West London' deals with the rich-and-poor theme, yet the treatment of social questions is merely incidental in his poetry. When we compare Arnold's poetry with the prose and the letters, we are struck by the fact that the more in the latter he grows absorbed in social questions, the more does he explore distant legends for the content of his poems. There is a significant dichotomy in the contents of Arnold's writings: what is good for prose is not apparently found good for poetry.

The reason for the dichotomy is inherent in Arnold's concept of the objects of poetry. In the preface to the 1853 volume of his *Poems*, Arnold explains his concept at length. 'What', asks he, 'are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations and at all times?' The objects are 'actions; human actions', and 'the modernity or antiquity of an action....has

nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation; this depends upon its inherent qualities.' Arnold says further that 'poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions' and must produce a 'total impression'.

Accepting then the hypothesis that a poetic action set against one age is as valid as a poetic action set against another, Arnold nevertheless prefers the antique fable to the modern. He writes:

> I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgement, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general.
>
> (*Poetical Works*, O. U. P., 1945, p. 13)

I know not how it is: a significant admission that. An empirical inference need not necessarily agree with a logical deduction. That Arnold does not find his hypothesis ratified by his experience of the actual works of modern literature, even though he cannot explain why the ratification should be lacking, is an evidence of his literary taste, a taste that conforms to the taste and judgment of the other major poets of the age. Like Tennyson and Browning, Matthew Arnold is personally interested in social problems and yet, like Tennyson and Browning, he finds the contemporary situation aesthetically less acceptable than fables of distant times. Classically-minded authors, Arnold says,

> attained their grand results by penetrating themselves with some noble and significant action, not by inflating themselves with a belief in the pre-eminent importance and greatness of their own times. They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, nor of the coming Poet; all this, they know, is the mere delirium of vanity....they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them; they are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this they can do nothing....that so far as the present age can

supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such...

(*Poetical Works*, p. 14)

The contemporary social situation does not provide Arnold with a theme. In rejecting this muddled situation in favour of deeper moral issues, Arnold brings himself in line with Tennyson and Browning. And perhaps this dichotomy within himself between his democratic sympathy for the suffering multitude and his realization of the unsuitability of this sympathy and this suffering for aesthetic purposes was an aggravating factor to his melancholy.

XI

This poetry of social ferment covers a wide range of topics and attitudes which not infrequently contradict one another. The contradiction was inevitable in an age when the nation—the first, in modern history, to take to democracy, technology and applied science—was excitedly trying to adjust its life to profoundly altered and still altering material conditions. This was the period when the principal implications of mechanized and science-dominated life manifested themselves in society, and the Early Victorians were really path-finders in problems that continue to face us today and in most regions of the world. Among nations that have been somewhat recently going the way of democracy, science and technology, the material conditions today are more or less comparable to the conditions prevailing in Early Victorian England, when allowances are made for the differences signified by post-Victorian discoveries in science and technique. To the impact of machinery and democracy on the social organization, the literatures of such nations have reacted along lines more or less similar to those of Early Victorian literature. The Early Victorian pattern of socio-economic ferment has its modern counterparts—once again, making all such allowances as history demands —in many parts of the world, not in Asia alone. Today's poet of a newly-emerging nation has, more often than not, to find himself confronted with aesthetic problems of a nature broadly similar to those of the Early Victorians and therefore it may be worth his while to draw lessons from, not necessarily to imitate, his British predecessor. Indeed, not only the poet of another nation and another language, but

the British poet of today as well, might find it instructive to study the poetry of the social ferment of a century ago.

In an age of far-reaching changes, as the Early Victorian period was, a multiplicity of opinions regarding ends and means was certain to prevail. Orthodoxy and progressivism quickly proved to be relative terms and inasmuch as the radical of today is often the diehard of tomorrow, shifts in social ideals and movements left a Samuel Bamford or a Thomas Cooper behind.[40] Among writer-politicians, opportunists were quite numerous and Browning's 'The Lost Leader' and Ebenezer Jones's 'Opinions Change' are among the many poems that were written at the time on the theme of turncoats. To whichever school of politics the poets of social reform may belong, they resolve themselves ultimately into two camps of social philosophy, individualist and collectivist, camps that distinguish the world of today as well.

Amidst the conflict of opinions—Tory, Radical, moderate, ecclesiastical, secular, Christian, materialist—we note an agreement on the sharp and antagonistic class-differences in society. The poetry of the period fully bears out, as the social and economic history does, the essential justification of Disraeli's division of the British people of the time into two nations. Earlier in the century, Jeffrey had praised Crabbe for having chosen his characters from 'the lower ranks of life' and his scenery from 'the most ordinary and familiar objects of nature and art'.[41] In our period, a number of writers choose similar subjects with a definite social purpose. One of the effects of this class-difference on poetry is the rise of a large group of 'uneducated poets', some of whom try honestly to give expression to proletarian feelings while some others, for reasons we shall discuss presently, carefully avoid their distinctive experiences. While the Chartist aims at removing class-difference by liquidating the privileged aristocracy; while the Young Englander urges an alliance between the two natural classes,

the Aristocracy and Labour; while the Christian Socialist applies his interpretation of the gospel to social problems; while the humanist seeks to disentangle the enduring principles of life from the fluid passion of the moment; all agree that the miseries of poverty which have overwhelmed the labouring classes during the last half-century or more require speedy eradication. The rich-and-poor theme is a frequent one in this period. Among the large number of other topical questions discussed in verse are the Corn Laws and Free Trade; the anti-social character of the Church; factory conditions, conditions in mines, child-labour, female labour, agricultural labour; slavery, colonial life, emigration, convicts; temperance and the fallen woman; Malthusian, Chartist, Owenite, Utilitarian, Socialist doctrines. Indeed Early Victorian poetry represents faithfully and comprehensively the many-sided socio-economic problems of the times.

Attempts are made to diagnose the disease of the society and to find adequate remedies. In these early days of industrial and imperialist economy, there is very little attempt to make any objective and minute analysis of the causes, the nature, and the effects of the social ferment. Most poets desire to see a general, comprehensive plan—to be devised by some wise statesman—but their own approach to the solution of the social predicament is almost invariably on a moral and emotional plane. Avarice, materialism and selfishness of the upper classes are supposed by some to be the root of the evil. Pleas for mercy to the poor mingle with aggressive and threatening assertions of their rights and these assertions raise the more fundamental problem of the structure of society. Can the rights of the people be best maintained under an oligarchical superintendence of their well-being or will they flourish better after a total elimination of class-inequality? There are those who believe that hierarchy is a natural, beneficent and irremovable principle of society; there are others, on the contrary,

who think that complete socialism alone (either the materialistic variety or, better still, Christian Socialism) can rid society of economic suffering as well as the travails of international war.

Whatever their views, none of the Early Victorian writers advocates the *status quo*. Nostalgic praise for the good old days is rare. Disraeli praises feudalism in *The Revolutionary Epick* while his admirer the Hon. George Sydney Smythe sings of the 'Merchants of England'. With less deliberate political ideology, William Dearden glorifies the 'Sires of good old times', the 'Dames of good old times', and the 'primeval tenants of the native hills', and Eliza Cook writes wistfully of old story-books and old street-cries. A notable expression of this feeling comes from F. H. Doyle :

> Nay, in the rough old times of old,
> When steel had lordship over gold,
> Their life showed better hope and plan,
> Stood straighter before God and man.
>
> (*The Two Destinies*, p. 19)

This nostalgia, issuing from a revulsion against the complexities of a fast-growing materialistic civilization, soon grew into a cult of medievalism with its stronghold among the Tractarians and the Pre-Raphaelites or into an escape to lands beyond the pale of European society. But in spite of these occasionally romantic tendencies, the poets were too powerfully conscious of the forces of progress to fight shy of change. When Tennyson, writing the *Morte d'Arthur* in 1835, explained the changeability of the social order as an expression of the divine law, he and his readers might have had the contemporary social order in view which, however good it might originally have been, had now grown corrupt and needed replacement.

In Early Victorian poetry, even as opinions vary regarding

the cause of social misery and the end of social reconstruction, there also arise different views in respect of the means to be adopted. The cry of revolution, quick and bloody, is raised in some quarters, yet 'Gradual' is a frequent word of peculiar potency in the vocabulary of the times, and most writers are at bottom constitutionalists. No writer, again, is too much of a materialist to ignore religion. In fact, even those who are furious with churchmen and the existing church organization, speak of their idea of a purer and more sympathetic church, and with all these writers God remains the final court of appeal. It is instructive to study the religious attitudes of such writers as Ebenezer Elliott, J. M. Morgan, Capel Lofft and Thomas Cooper. Morgan criticizes (in *The Reproof of Brutus*) the Bible, church functionaries, and sectarianism, but also emphasizes his reverence for the 'great Exemplar of the Christian scheme'. Elliott, even while writing bloodthirsty lyrics, gives evidence of religious humility. Capel Lofft, who bitterly hates priestcraft, believes Christ to have been the first of the Socialists :

> Saviour alike and leveller of man,
> Divine reformer, and arch-republican,
> For what are we but workers of his will ?
> .. ..
> Whatever befall, enduring all alike,
> Hardship or ease, to suffer or to strike:
> Counting all gain, and careless of all loss,
> Save of Christ only, and his holy Cross,
>
> (*Ernest*, VII, 662-680)

The only agnostic among all these poets of social ferment, Thomas Cooper lost faith through his study of Strauss but, as he says in his autobiography, he underwent a strange experience while lecturing to an audience of rationalists and made a total recantation. Like Cooper, another Chartist poet, Gerald Massey, devoted his later days to religious thoughts.

In spite of the wide range and earnest treatment of social questions in verse, very little really good poetry emerges from this mass of writing and the outstanding poets seldom deal directly with these questions. That the social ferment loomed large in the vision of all sensitive and thoughtful men and women of the period is evident to one who has knowledge of the biographies, letters, and memoirs of the period. Contemporary critics and reviewers quite often regarded the social situation as a fit theme of great poetry. The *Quarterly Review*[12] writes; 'Its [the age's] want cannot be of themes and interest but rather of those able to seize what lies before them, and turn it to right imaginative use.' Some time later, the journal refers[13] to the reproduction in imaginative literature of the Condition-of-England question but does not think that much good will come out of it. The *Athenaeum*[44] disapproves of those writers who 'are still persisting in the dream of acquiring Fame by epics of the *past* and names bearing no relation to actual society and living interest.' The *Monthly Repository*,[45] a progressive magazine, calls upon the poets to 'participate in the task of improving man's condition, social, individual, physical, moral and intellectual.' Although as a subject for poetry, the social situation was approved by public opinion, it is a curious fact that the social unrest constitutes in only a very small measure the substance of the worthy poetry of the age. Poems of Early Victorian social discontent that are still readable can almost be counted on one's fingers: some of Ebenezer Elliott's lyrics, some of Mrs. Browning's, Ebenezer Jones's and Thomas Wade's; Hood's 'Song of the Shirt', 'Bridge of Sighs', and 'Miss Kilmansegg'; the poems of Tregarva in Kingsley's *Yeast:* and a few lines in Thomas Cooper, Gerald Massey, and Ernest Jones. Capel Lofft and Mrs. Browning render the social unrest into the basic theme of their sustained works while Clough does so partially. Browning, Tennyson, and Matthew Arnold soar beyond this unrest.

That feeble poets should fare badly in their poetic ventures need not surprise us. After all, it is not the theme that makes memorable poetry but the poet. What is rather surprising is that the major poets, thoroughly conscious of the social situation in their personal lives, did not find in the situation any source of poetic inspiration. As poets, they kept themselves aloof from the ferment. Should we account for this dichotomy between man and poet by saying that the Early Victorians did not find the questions significant enough for impulsion into poetic utterance, or that they were too egoistic to care for problems that did not directly touch their own lives, or that their concept of the function of poetry did not admit of such themes ? Or will it be satisfactory to ask: Who shall say to the poet that he must write on such and such a theme because we, no poets ourselves, have argued in its favour ? The poet's artistic growth is a subtle process partaking of both the spirit of the environments and independent individual experience although the proportion of the two elements may and does vary unpredictably. Refusing to be lotos-eating world-losers and world-forsakers, the Early Victorians were keenly aware of their social responsibilities and yet, in their poetic practice, the major poets actually avoided the immediate environments. It is possible to argue that in spite of the widespread distress and agitation in the country, the writers were satisfied that, on the whole, progress to prosperity and justice was being maintained. Correct estimates of the personalities of the poets would hardly justify such an argument . It is again possible to argue that the distress did not affect the class to which the major poets belonged. It is an argument that would prove how unbridgeable the class-cleavage had become but the argument is untenable seeing that the novelists who were of the same social class as the poets did not neglect the social distress.

It is hazardous to generalize where a number of capable poets

are concerned. Each major poet is a world in himself and what urges a poet to correlate his creative impulse to one particular theme rather than to another is a matter to be understood in terms of his mental processes rather than of the facts of his environments. The reasons for Tennyson's reaction to the social situation may be miles asunder from, say, Mrs. Browning's reaction. But even after we have made allowance for every difference that individual temperaments make—and the Victorians were highly individualistic—it is still possible to understand the poets' deliberate rejection of the contemporary situation as a part of their larger concept of the function of poetry. What idea prevailed in the Early Victorian period of the legitimacy or otherwise of political and social questions as themes of poetry? A good deal of discussion took place on the subject during the fourth and fifth decades of the century. The *Athenaeum* reviewing the *Corn Law Rhymes*, writes:

> The intention of poetry is, like that of sorrow, to make the human heart better—to strengthen its energies and purify its emotions. Political poetry, however powerful, does not do this; it appeals not to our better passions—it stirs our blood, but it does not calm our tempers.
>
> (*The Athenaeum*, 1831, p. 370)

> The only politics for *poetry* are the politics of human nature and the whole universe—not those modifications of law and government which are expounded by act of Parliaments....poetry may declaim and take a side, but, like a beautiful woman in battle, she is not in her sphere....The politics for poetry must be those that appeal to the heart universal...she may twine wreaths for Freedom—denounce Oppression—lighten down upon Cruelty—have, like the angel of the Apocalypse, her vial of wrath no less than her golden vial of odours; but she must deal with these subjects rather in the abstract than in the detail—rather as principles than personalities.
>
> (Ibid. pp. 577-78)

The frothy images in these paragraphs do not conceal the uneasiness that the writer feels about the introduction of radical politics in poetry. Contemporary reviews state again and again a hope that the poets should absorb the new social ideals, and yet when actually some poets dare do so, the reviewers are seriously perturbed, on grounds not of their artistic incompetence but of their radicalism. This anomalous attitude of the critics is particularly noticeable in the reviews of the so-called 'uneducated poets' or working-class versifiers, a whole crop of whom arose between 1830 and 1850. The liberalism of the age gave these writers, a welcome, frequently a condescending welcome, but as soon as one of them produced verses impregnated with political convictions or radical social ideas, the reviewers raised a hue and cry. Indeed, there is justice in Kingsley's comment in *Yeast* on Honoria's attitude to Tregarva's poem:

> She was a staunch believer, too, in that peculiar creed which allows every one to feel for the poor, except themselves, and considers that to plead the cause of the working-man is, in a gentleman, the perfection of virtue, but in a working-man himself, sheer high treason.
>
> (*Yeast*, ch. xi)

As a rule, these working-class poets, many of whom utterly lack any flair for poetry, avoid the unpleasant ground of social controversies, and even the sorrowful ground of their own social disabilities, in order docilely to follow the conventional themes of poetry. Samuel Smiles has pertinent observations on this matter:

> In former times, when literature was regarded mainly in the light of a rich man's luxury, poets who rose out of the working-class sang as their patrons wished. Bloomfield and Clare sang of the quiet beauty of rural life, and painted pictures of evening skies, purling brooks, and grassy meads. Burns could with difficulty

repress the 'Jacobin' spirit which burned within him; and yet even he was rarely, if ever, political in tone....But come down to our own day, and mark the difference: Elliott, Nicol, Bamford, the author of 'Ernest', the Chartist Epic, David, the 'Belfast Man', De Jean, Massey, and many others are intensely political; and they defend themselves for their selection of subjects.

(Introductory Biographic Sketch to the *Poetical Works of Gerald Massey*, London, 1861, pp. viii-ix)

Smiles is not correct when he includes Capel Lofft among working-class writers; Nicol and Bamford have very few political poems; it is supercilious to carp at a working-class writer's writing of evening skies and purling brooks. The fact however remains that far too few of these poetical aspirants wrote of the life and environment of which they had personal and indeed poignant knowledge. Possibly they avoided the theme of social misery because of the hostility of the reviewers to it. Consider the attitude of the *Quarterly*, in those days treated as 'the next book to God's Bible'. The review of the *Corn Law Rhymes* warns the poet: 'As he tenders his soul, let him keep his thoughts from blood'.[46] The same influential journal condemns the Chartist Epic *Ernest* for being 'so extravagant in its political views, and so abhorrent from that attachment to public order, to gradual improvement, to Christian virtue and piety,'[47] and the condemnation intimidated Capel Lofft into withdrawing the 1839 print of his work from circulation. If Capel Lofft, a poet as respectable and educated as the reviewers, and Ebenezer Elliott, who was held in high esteem by men like Cobbett and Mill, could receive rough handling from the reviewers just because of their political views, the poets of humbler origin could very well adopt the better part of valour. Ebenezer Elliott was among the few poets who had the courage and strength to defend their choice of political themes.

I will now tell my friend of the *Athenaeum* why I think there is nothing unnatural or improper in the union of poetry and politics. Because I think that any subject whatever in which man takes interest, however humble and commonplace it may be, is capable of inspiring high and true poetry.

(Preface to the *Corn Law Rhymes*, p. 48)

Elegant critics complain that the union of poetry with politics is always hurtful to the politics and fatal to the poetry....the gentlemen critics must be wrong, if Homer, Dante, Milton Cowper, and Burns were poets. Why should the sensitive bard take less interest than other men in those things which most nearly concern mankind ?

(Ibid. p. 49)

Similarly Charles Mackay discusses the question of a proper balance between poetry and politics :

To introduce politics into poetry is thought to be wrong by many critics....These objectors confound politics with party, which is a mistake; and they think poetry destined for amusement, which is another.

(Introductory Essay to *Egeria*, p. xi)

This notion of the nature of the politics of political poetry is shared by Gerald Massey :

I am convinced that a poet must sacrifice much if he write party-political poetry. His politics must be above the pinnacle of party zeal; the politics of eternal truth, right, and justice,

(*Poetical Works of Gerald Massey*, p. xiii)

The notion agrees with the contemporary critical opinion that poets are to be exponents of principles. If they are to play their rightful part in the 'improvement' of society, which they are called upon to do, they must express in their works the *spirit* of the age rather than facts and details. They are not required to 'commemorate in hexameters and alexandrines, the debates on the Factory Bill, and to imitate in verse the

whistling, panting and screaming of a locomotive engine.'[48] That the major poets were in agreement with this view of the function of poets is proved by their practice in the choice and treatment of themes. Tennyson represents the opinion of his contemporaries when he states that party-politics compel a poet to take only a half-view of things and that such intellectual astigmatism is fatal to the poet's business of presenting truth imaginatively. The novelists of the period had no such scruples about the choice of their themes. The flexibility and capaciousness of the novel as a literary form enabled Early Victorian novelists to embody social problems in their works and frequently to deal with documentary details relating to the social predicament. Some of the minor versifiers made valiant attempts to put their political convictions to poetic uses but their works suffer from a feebleness which not even their admiration for Milton and Shelley could remedy.

The question of the relation between poetry and politics exercises the modern reader's mind too. The modern reader can easily accept Ebenezer Elliott's assertion that 'there is nothing unnatural or improper in the union of poetry and politics.' From the point of view of poetry, the real weakness of the poets of the Early Victorian social ferment lies in their failure to realize how circumscribed the emotional content of the ferment was and in their inability to adjust the form and style of their poetry to the content. Of a sense of social iniquity, two passions can be engendered, hatred, and anger. Neither of these is a delectable passion that the human mind would care to cherish for a length of time; nor does any of these passions possess a wide gamut of subtleties on which a poet can play several variations. As in the case of Ebenezer Elliott's *Corn Law Rhymes*, a number of lyrics on the same themes of anger and hatred sound insipid after a time. The lyrical form, occasionally suitable for the expression of these themes, fails to satisfy when the themes are recurrent.

Some of the Early Victorians, realizing the shortcomings of the lyrical form, searched for a new form. 'I am inclined to think,' wrote Elizabeth Barrett, 'that we want new *forms*, as well as thoughts,'[49] and she and several others among her contemporaries experimented with the form of what they called the 'novel-poem'. These writers seemed to realize that the unorthodox and elastic form of the verse-novel permitted them a freer scope to deal with the social situation than the lyric. They seemed also to realize that since the novel must have some kind of a fable and a plot, the plot could provide an objective correlative to the passion emanating from the social situation and thus mitigate its monotony. In Capel Lofft's *Ernest*, one of the earliest verse-novels in the language and a fairly successful one at that, the theme of revolution is intertwined with the theme of love, and both themes have been merged into a story. This process of integration and correlation can be discerned in the most successful verse-novel of the period—perhaps of all times so far—Mrs. Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. Other works like Clough's *Bothie*, Sterling's *Election* and Allingham's *Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland* present casual treatments of the social theme more effectively than the full-fledged lyrical treatments.

Most Early Victorian poets, as we have seen, felt that the contemporary social distress was a symptom of certain fundamental needs of civilization and that the responsibilities of their high vocation made it necessary for them to probe deeply into these needs. And probe they did. In overleaping the details of the immediate problems, the Early Victorian poets were far from being escapists. Mr. Kenneth Muir who has studied these poets of social discontent, finds Victorian prose more serious than Victorian verse apparently on the ground that while all the novelists and prose writers dealt with the state of society, 'poetry' generally speaking, had become a drawing-room pastime.'[50] In literary criticism,

we have to distinguish between prose and verse as forms. As we have seen already, what Matthew Arnold did as a writer of prose, he did not do as a poet. It would not be fair criticism to consider Victorian prose and verse as equivalents. It would be still less fair to suggest that the Victorian poets intended their poetry to be a drawing-room pastime. If *Sordello*, *In Memoriam*, *Aurora Leigh*, *Bothie*, *The Angel in the House* and *House of Life* were drawing-room pastime for the average Victorian reader who, in Mr. Muir's words, 'did not wish to be troubled with thoughts beyond the reaches of his soul', it speaks well of the average reader's soul and his notion of a pastime. The fact is, as a study of Early Victorian poetics can convince us, the age entertained a high conception of the function of poetry and the poets themselves were keenly aware of the climacteric in civilization that they were witnessing. So keenly indeed were they aware of their responsibilities that poet after poet sat down to write 'the poem of the age', to attain to a philosophical synthesis of the many and sometimes conflicting aspects of life. As to whether the Victorians succeeded in discovering such a synthesis or whether even the post-Victorians have the glory of the discovery is another matter, but there cannot be any question about the seriousness of the Victorian concept of poetry. One could even find the concept a little too serious for full enjoyment.

A notable consequence of the Victorian poets' attempt to interpret spiritual truths in the context of the requirements of their age is the emergence of the idea of the representative man. This idea is an integral part of the poets' reaction to the social situation. If we are on the threshold of a new phase of civilization, a new social order and new human relations, it behoves us to ponder more over the basic principles of such a civilization than over the painful details of the transition. Preoccupation with the details may throw the larger pattern

out of focus. For that larger pattern, for the anticipated social order, man has to work, work singly or collectively, work with a deliberate purpose. This worker is the representative man, and nearly every Victorian poet worth the name tries to visualize the representative man. Tennyson's Arthur Hallam, endowed with 'seraphic intellect and force' and a 'soul on highest mission sent' might have led his people to progressive self-fulfilment. In the character of Hallam, we have Tennyson's conception of the coming man, a conception which becomes somewhat abstract in the other Arthur of the *Idylls of the King*. Browning makes two experiments with the concept of the representative man, in Paracelsus and in Sordello; Mrs. Browning's Romney Leigh has suffered the agonies of leadership; R. H. Horne's Orion 'is the type of a Worker and a Builder for his fellow-men'; William Bell Scott's Lyremmos in *The Year of the World* is the representative of his race; Philip James Bailey's Festus is 'the world-man'; Capel Lofft's aristocratic Linsingen is the typical revolutionary social reformer; Charles Mackay's Julian in *Egeria, or the Spirit of Nature* is an earnest idealist who is eager to serve mankind. Preoccupation with the representative man is indeed widespread in the whole of Victorian literature. The major poets of the Early Victorian period sought to assess the value of the immediate social ferment in relation to larger and deeper spiritual issues; the lesser poets followed them sooner or later. Who shall say that as poets and thinkers they made an incorrect choice?

'LAYS OF SORROW BORN'

—TENNYSON'S *IN MEMORIAM*

I

June 1850 was a red-letter month in Tennyson's life. It saw the publication of *In Memoriam* by Edward Moxon and also the poet's marriage with Emily Sellwood after ten years of separation.

This first published edition of the poem was preceded by an earlier draft which had been set in type but withdrawn for further revision and addition.[1] The first edition was of anonymous authorship but few reviews[2] — one of them being the notice in the *Literary Gazette*, the earliest notice of the work—failed to identify the author. That the poem achieved immediate popularity is attested to by the publication of two more editions before the year was out.

Arthur Hallam died on 15 September 1833, in Vienna, and already in December, Tennyson was composing elegiac pieces to record his grief.[3] The composition of these lyrical pieces from time to time during 1834-49 was no secret to the poet's friends. Before their publication, these pieces were referred to in the Tennyson circle as 'elegies' and even the trial-edition of May 1850 bore the title 'Fragments of an Elegy'. 'I felt certain of one point then,' Tennyson is reported to have said once,[4] 'if I meant to make any mark at all, it must be by shortness.' Up to the 1842 volumes, Tennyson had published lyrics only; he had even expressed a disdain for 'the epos of the day'.[5] And yet in 1847, he developed in a long poem the theme of the woman's question which he had discussed

with Emily Sellwood in 1839 and of which the germ can be discerned in the unpublished lines 'Sweet Kitty Sandilands'.[6] Of the sections of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson wrote, 'I did not write them with any view of weaving them into a whole, or for publication, until I found that I had written so many.'[7] We do not know precisely when the idea of organizing the elegiac lyrics into a unified structure came to Tennyson but his abjuration of the resolve to publish only short lyrics, the publication of *The Princess*, and finally his decision to emancipate the disjointed elegiac pieces from their original order of composition to the coordinated design of a long poem, go to show that in the late forties he had yielded to the prevalent vogue of the long poem.

During the forties, there was much talk of the 'Poem of the Age' which was expected to be something more than just poetry; it was to be the interpreter of the age.[8] The poets no less than the reviewers of the period were excited by the idea of the 'poem of the age' and we find Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett discussing in 1846 'the *only* Poem to be undertaken by any one who was a poet at all.'[9] About the same time, the young Coventry Patmore, we are told by his biographer,[10] conceived the ambition of writing 'what was to be *the* poem of the day.' R. H. Horne, a prominent figure in the literary circles of the day, in the prefatory note to the first edition of his remarkable long poem *Orion*, calls it 'a novel experiment upon the mind of a nation'; the novelty lay as much in the allegorical content of the poem as in its price, a farthing. William Bell Scott, the painter-poet, confesses to having 'nursed a superstition on the subject of long poems on great and important motives.'[11] There are evidences to show that at least some of Tennyson's friends such as Hallam, Monckton Milnes and Trench had pondered over and discussed in the thirties the functions and duties of the Poet of the age. Hallam Tennyson thus records the effect

of a letter written about 1835 to Tennyson by G. S. Venables:

> The great Catholic painters could express what was at the same time ideal and real in the minds of the people: but the modern artist has hardly ever found similar objects of high imagination and intense popular feeling for his art to work upon. If, wrote Venables, in a contemporary letter to my father, an artist could now find out where these objects are, he would be *the* artist of modern times. Venables affirmed they were not to be sought in transient fashions of thought, but in the 'convergent tendencies of many opinions' on religion, art and nature,—of which tendencies he and others believed, he said, my father, with his commanding intellect, and conspicuous moral courage, ought to be the artistic exponent and unifier. My father pondered all that had been said, and—after a period of prostration from grief, and many dark fits of blank despondency—his passionate love of truth, of nature, and of humanity, drove him to work again, with a deeper and a fuller insight into the requirements of the age.
>
> (*Memoir*,i, 123)

The requirements of the age—Tennyson, intensely aware of his responsibility as a poet, cogitated over them. But the poet ambitious of interpreting his age has to find the objects whereupon his art may worthily work, as Venables suggested to Tennyson. The problem for the self-conscious and ambitious Early Victorian poet was first to discover which aspects of contemporary life were of sufficient significance for this interpretative purpose, and once such aspects were discerned, the second problem was to organize them to their best advantage and effectiveness, such organization almost making inevitable a certain degree of lengthiness in the work. So alert an artist as Tennyson must have been aware of these problems and, it may be presumed, the unification of the chronologically separate lyrics into the architectonics of a long work sprang from his resolve to meet the requirements of the age.

II

Venables had written to Tennyson of the convergent tendencies of many opinions on religion, art and nature. Tennyson's own deeply religious temper—speaking of religion in its more than ecclesiastical sense—and the nature of the basic theme of the elegies—the physical death of one's second self, as it were,—were bound to make *In Memoriam* a testament of faith. And as such the poem was recognized by the poet's contemporaries especially after Charles Kingsley's review of the work in *Fraser's Magazine* as 'the noblest Christian poem which England has produced for two centuries' and F. W Robertson's eloquent analysis of it in his lectures.[12]

The religious consciousness is indeed a source of inspiration of a great deal of Early Victorian poetry. Leaving aside the unalloyed sacred and ecclesiastical verse of the *Lyra Apostolica* group, of the Tractarians and the anti-Tractarians, in a large part of Early Victorian poetry, the discerning reader will find no sharp demarcation between the religious inspiration and the secular. The religious consciousness permeates numerous poems dealing with obviously non-religious themes such as sexual love, social relations, and philosophical speculations. Patmore finds in conjugal love a religious creed. In the gospel of social work in *Aurora Leigh*, the religious element is conspicuous. Poets of social discontent like Ebenezer Elliott and Capel Lofft are ardently Christian though fiercely anti-clerical. The essence of the idea of progress as presented in Browning's *Paracelsus* and Bell Scott's *The Year of the World* is Christian. The religious consciousness manifests itself in Early Victorian poetry in another way. A crisis in faith is the common feature

of the early works of several writers among whom are John Sterling, Tennyson, Arthur Hallam, Browning and Clough. Doubtless, these crises can be attributed to the peculiar personal experiences of the authors concerned: theological controversy, the death of a dear friend, readings in Voltaire and Shelley, and so forth. At the same time, it has to be recognized that an eddy of complex contemporary forces lent support to the personal disquiet: the new impact of materialism on the religious sensibility, the condition of the Church, utilitarianism, confusion in social conditions and relationships. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* stands at the head of the Victorian literature of spiritual travail. The student of poetry finds this widespread crisis important because it contributes a powerful and almost ubiquitous theme to the content of the poetry of the period. With many writers, the awareness of intellectual doubt grows into a moving poetic emotion. Thus Monckton Milnes speaks of 'the charred and molten dust', 'the embased form' of the human personality; Charles Whitehead yearns to set himself free from the 'hideous slough of sin', and Branwell Brontë speaks in the same vein.[13] A harrowing memory of the free-thinking in which he had indulged in his teens leads to the extraordinary intensity of the following lines of Browning's *Pauline* where in spite of much gyrating self-analysis, self-loathing and restlessness, the youthful poet's devotion to Christ appears unshakable:

> Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?
> Why have I laboured to put out my life?
> Is it not in my nature to adore,
> And e'en for all my reason do I not
> Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him—now?
> Can I forego the trust which only ONE....
> O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed!

Arthur Hallam experiences a burning sense of sinfulness which presently gives way to chastened faith:

But I am seared : he in whom lies the world
Is coiled around the fibres of my heart,
And with his serpentine, thought-withering gaze
Doth fascinate the sovran rational eye.

(*Writings*, p. 36)

I arose, and walked
With a more earnest and reverent heart
Forth to the world, which God had made so fair,
Mixed now with trails of error and of sin.

(Ibid. p. 70)

A sonnet of Tennyson's belonging to the Cambridge period expresses a feeling of similar spiritual disquiet:

When that rank heat of evil's tropic day
Made floating cloud of flowing joy, and cleft
My shores of life (their freshness steamed away,
Nothing but salt and bitter crystals left),
.. ..
When all sin-sickened, loathing my disgrace,

(*Unpublished Early Poems*, p. 65)

Such are the poetic effects of the first stirrings of that religious scepticism which distinguishes the second half of the century. As yet, in the thirties and the forties, the religious conflict leaves no incurable indentation on the poetic mind; aside from the cases of Clough and Thomas Cooper (of *The Purgatory of Suicides*), there is no evidence of unconquered scepticism in the poetry of the Early Victorian period. The poets pass through the phases of doubt and remorse to affirmation; the Everlasting No opens the door to the Everlasting Yea, but the religious sensibility, in some degree or the other, permeates a good deal of poetry that is neither ecclesiastical nor mainly and strictly devotional in intent. The aesthetic value of this pervasive sensibility is that, amalgamated with non-devotional ideals and impulses, it constitutes a frequent and earnest source

of the poetic inspiration. Of that entwined inspiration, *In Memoriam* is an outstanding product. Tennyson himself took care to define the purpose of his poem thus:

> If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
> Were taken to be such as closed
> Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
> Then these were such as men might scorn:
>
> Her care is not to part and prove;
> She takes when harsher moods remit,
> What slender shade of doubt may flit,
> And makes it vassal unto love.
>
> (Section xlviii)

'Lays of Sorrow born'—the phrase describes perfectly the genesis and the fundamental character of the poem. And yet, despite the author's disavowal of theological meanings and his emphasis on the unspeculative lyrical purport of the poem, *In Memoriam* actually raises questions of faith and doubt that go far beyond such cogitations on the mystery of life and death as fall under the usual scope of the elegy. Milton, Gray and Shelley, on the contrary, had no need to be theology-conscious like Tennyson. 'It was meant to be a kind of *Divina Commedia*', Tennyson wrote.[14] Like Dante's poem, *In Memoriam* is at once religious and secular and, as such, marks the culmination of the major tendency of Early Victorian poetry. To regard *In Memoriam* principally as a statement of religious conflict and faith as Bishop Westcott and Professor Henry Sidgwick did[15] would lead to an incomprehensive and partial assessment of the value of the poem; to ignore altogether the significance of such a conflict would be no less an act of astigmatic criticism.

III

The intellectual content of *In Memoriam* mainly relates to (i) the question of the immortality of the soul, (ii) the consideration of evil in human nature, (iii) the consideration of evil in external nature, of the apparent strife between God and Nature, (iv) a compromise between Knowledge and Wisdom, and (v) the idea of Progress.

Correctly to appreciate Tennyson's treatment of these ideas and questions, we have to remember the peculiar value of *In Memoriam* as a record of his inner development. The earliest of these lyrics were jotted down soon after Hallam's death while the latest pieces were later than the *Princess*. For at least sixteen years, Tennyson was more or less occupied with these elegies, composing some, rejecting or revising others, perhaps pondering much of the time how best to weave them together into a single pattern. Obviously then, the three-year division of the internal chronology of the poem differs from the actual course of its composition. Nevertheless, as we consider the matter, we find that Tennyson's time-scheme is not just arbitrary, not merely an after-thought and a superimposed artistic device, but that by virtue of its veracity as a psychological record, it bears an almost exact inner correspondence to the actual sequence and duration of the emotions that the poet had experienced. There is now no means of knowing precisely the original order of composition of all the poems[16] but studying the earliest-written sections—making allowance for later revisions—we find these much less spiritually disturbed than many of the other poems. Consider the lines which occur in J. M. Heath's Commonplace Book and which Sir Charles Tennyson supposes 'may have been composed tentatively for the *In Memoriam* sequence.'[17]

But leave not thou thy son forlorn,
  Teach me, great Nature, make me live.

As when thy sunlights, a mild heat,
  Touch some dun meer that sleepeth still;
As when thy moonlights, dim and sweet,
  Touch some gray ruin on the hill.

Sept. 1833

Other fragmentary lines, written probably early in 1834 'which proved to be the germ of *In Memoriam*' are:

Where is the voice I loved ? ah where
Is that dear hand that I would press ?
Lo ! the broad heavens cold and bare,
The stars that know not my distress !

.. .. ..

The vapour labours up the sky,
Uncertain forms are darkly moved !
Larger than human passes by
The shadow of the man I loved,
And clasps his hands, as one that prays !

(*Memoir*, i, p. 107)

This is deep grief beautifully expressed but there is nothing here of that intellectual doubt which pervades the middle sections of the poem. On the evidence of these tentative and fragmentary lines and of those sections that can plausibly be held to be among the earliest-written of the sequence, it is possible to argue that Tennyson's grief was not, in its initial stage spiritually disruptive. In 1834, he wrote, among other poems, 'Ulysses', 'Sir Galahad', 'O that 'twere possible', and 'Love thou thy land', none of which shows that 'utter prostration from grief, and many dark fits of blank despondency' mentioned by Hallam Tennyson.[18] No doubt the 'Two Voices' shows how the poet's religious faith had reeled under the blow of the sudden bereavement but there is no evidence[19]

that this poem was a contemporary of the earliest-written sections of *In Memoriam*. Through a period of blank despondency Tennyson must have passed, his native hypochondria heightening the grief, but we do not know the precise months or year when he was mentally prostrate. We have to presume that this period of spiritual prostration, of intellectual agony, appeared after the comparatively tranquil grief that immediately followed Hallam's death and was itself succeeded by a period of equipoise.

From 1836 onwards, Tennyson was meeting Emily Sellwood quite often and the *Memoir* thus describes the state of Tennyson's mind in 1838:

> The years spent in strenuous labour and self-education, and his engagement to Emily Sellwood, had again braced my father for the struggle of life. The current of his mind no longer ran constantly in the channel of mournful forebodings. . . . His friends had not yet grasped the change in the tenor of his thoughts and still tried to cheer him. . . . He was on the whole happy in his life, and looked forward to still better days.
>
> (*Memoir*, i, pp. 165-66)

Moods of doubt and depression came to Tennyson occasionally even after 1837-38. In fact, that he was, till the end, susceptible to these moods is proved by several later poems and by the reference in the *Memoir* to a gloomy mood as late as 1892.[20] But the point to note here is that, as the valuable paragraph of Hallam Tennyson definitely states, by 1838 Tennyson's emotional and intellectual crisis arising from grief had abated to normalcy. New doubts and new pains might and did occur thereafter but the subsequent travails followed the pattern of the first, the voice of faith prevailing over the voice of doubt, while no subsequent cycle of grief and hope acquired the intensity of the first. The wave-like movement of rising doubt and levelling faith experienced during the first four or five years after Hallam's death constitutes a rhythmic pattern to which

Tennyson, while stringing the sections together, gave a neat and not entirely inexact or unveracious outline in the three-year division. This rhythmic movement of doubt and faith, disruption and rehabilitation, misery and hope, is true of the whole life of Tennyson, recurring from time to time though not with the same lengths of interval and duration, and is truer still of the seventeen crucial years between the death of Hallam and the publication of *In Memoriam*. Lascelles Abercrombie finds in the poem 'the first stage in the process which Tennyson indicated in *Merlin and the Gleam*—the transformation of instinctive experience ito interpretative wisdom, under the influence of sorrow.'[21] Abercrombie is right though one would call it rather the first cycle than the first stage since the process is more cyclical than vertical and the transformation recorded in the later poems follows essentially the same pattern as that in *In Memoriam* and within *In Memoriam* itself there are groups of interlinked poems conforming to this pattern, heightening thus the effect of the larger and fuller pattern of the whole poem. The appreciation of this inner rhythm of *In Memoriam* enhances our aesthetic enjoyment of the poem equally as it deepens our understanding of Tennyson's poetic purpose, method and achievement.

IV

An instinctive fascination for the gloomy side of life can be noticed in Tennyson's poetry from the very beginning. The juvenile *Poems by Two Brothers* shows him attracted to the idea of death and the dead,[22] but as yet melancholy is more an idea than a personally-experienced and germinal emotion and he can complacently state that 'they die the common death of man'.[23] Hallam's death, however, stung him to a powerful reaction, at once emotional and intellectual, and thenceforth Tennyson began to record his elegiac musings in the four-lined tetrameter stanza. The development registered between the poems written before Hallam's death and after is a development equally in expressive capacity and authenticity of experience.

From the idea of death, moreover, Tennyson has now moved on to the idea of life after death. The 'second rate sensitive mind not in unity with itself'[24] has not gained that faith in immortality which, it admits, is so important in a total concept of life but which, however, the follower of life and faith in 'The Two Voices' has gained. In this latter poem, there are speculations about the state of the human soul before and after physical existence; the voice of faith even dallies vaguely for a while with the idea of metempsychosis. In *In Memoriam*, this essential idea of an after-life is given a different form.

Now it is held that the soul after death does not assume any corporeal shape but as an essence moves ever higher from one state to another (section xxx). The idea of immortality occupies the poet in sections xxx-xlvii. Though not certain about the actual post-mortem state of the soul, of its immortality he has no doubt. This conviction is based on two kinds of evidence, revealed religion and mystic glimmerings within

himself, and the stronger evidence is this second, originating in 'my own dim life':

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;
.. ..
What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die.

(Section xxxiv)

One is reminded of the conviction of Paracelsus:

Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one
I say 'tis but a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

(*Paracelsus*, V)

On the assumption that death is the end-all of existence, Tennyson, like Browning, feels that life would be meaningless, ignoble and intolerable because love would either cease to exist or exist as merely sensual relationship. Since however the poet emphatically feels that love pervades human life as a force infinitely higher than sensual relationship, by a reverse process of argument, he arrives at the idea of immortality.

But merely a belief in the abstract idea of the survival of the soul does not solve Tennyson's emotional problem. His supreme need is the assurance of re-union with the beloved in the world beyond. This assurance is as difficult of attainment as the assurance of immortality. For instance, it may be that in the life beyond, the continual upward movement of souls

will perpetually maintain an unbridgeable distance between his soul and his friend's, or probably (assuming the non-Christian idea) souls will merge their individualities in the general soul. The warrant for this second idea could be found in a poem by Hallam himself :

> Oh tell me not ye sages, that our end
> Shall merge us in the godhead; I am made
> To seek with kindred souls my soul to blend.
> (*Writings*, 'To One Early Loved, Now in India,' VII)

It is a plausible conjecture that Tennyson had discussed the condition of the soul after death with Hallam alone or with the Apostles generally ; the conviction that souls re-unite after death came to him, as to Hallam, by way of the over-riding argument of love. On this question too, the resolution of doubts comes from the dictates of love within Tennyson's inmost soul :

> So be it: there no shade can last
> In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
> But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
> The eternal landscape of the past;
> .. ..
> O Love, thy province were not large,
> A bounded field, nor stretching far;
> Look also, Love, a brooding star,
> A rosy warmth from marge to marge.
> (Section xlvi)

The rhythmic pattern of moods in the poem consists in this recurring sequence of doubt and faith, faith which is inspired by love to cut across all arguments of rational knowledge. It is perhaps the failure to appreciate this twofold aspect of the inner rhythm of the poem, this alternate movement of two moods, that has led Mr. T. S. Eliot to make the following statement :

In Memoriam can, I think, justly be called a religious poem, but for another reason than that which made it seem religious to his contemporaries. It is not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt. Its faith is a poor thing, but its doubt is a very intense experience. *In Memoriam* is a poem of despair, but of despair of a religious kind.

(Introduction to *Poems of Tennyson*, p. xviii).

Tennyson's personal religion was, without question, one of faith, unequivocally declared in the prologue to *In Memoriam*. Apart however from any question of Tennyson's personal faith or the reader's, it is imperative to realize that in the rhythmic pattern of the poem, sorrow-tinged faith and doubt are co-equal constituents of the total poetic experience and that, moreover, doubt and faith evoke equally perfect poetry. In measuring an artist's faith by his utterance, the valid criterion should be the degree of aesthetic purity, intensity and beauty of that utterance. We would not have been concerned with Tennyson's grief or emotional agony but for the fact that that agony found expression in imperishable poetry. The valid datum —and we have no other datum one way or the other—in judging the quality of either the faith or the doubt in *In Memoriam* is offered by the poems that relate these spiritual conditions. Whether we should call the faith in *In Memoriam* 'a poor thing' or the doubt a poor thing, whether the poem is a poem of despair or a poem of faith, depends upon the poetic quality of the faith or the despair. The faith may be poor or rich, logically or theologically, but the discerning reader will not find it poetically poorer than the doubt. Nothing in *In Memoriam* surpasses the beauty of sections xi ('Calm is the morn without a sound'), lxxxvi ('Sweet after showers, ambrosial air'), cxv ('Now fades the last long streak of snow') and cxxx ('Thy voice is on the rolling air') and all these are poems not of despair but of affirmation. The two sections conveying the intensest degree of spiritual disturbance, lv and lvi ('The wish that of the living whole'

and '"So careful of the type ?" but no')—the latter with its piercing cry 'O life as futile, then, as frail !'—are preceded within a few sections by the lines 'Be near me when my light is low' and are a part of the rhythmic pattern in which the pangs of 'the sensuous frame' are soon to dissolve in the peace and faith of the succeeding sections, lxv and lxvii ('Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt' and 'When on my bed the moon-light falls'). The rhythm of Tennyson's imagination consists in the alternate movements of doubt and faith, a fully rounded total movement encompassing both doubt and faith, and it would be an act of disintegrating criticism to evaluate the doubt or the faith in terms of one's own spiritual and intellectual predilections and thereby to exalt the one over the other. If Tennyson's contemporaries were mistaken in over-emphasizing the faith of *In Memoriam*, his successors have been no less so in isolating its despair.

V

The doubt in the poem springs from two sources: (a) uncertainty regarding the after-state of the soul, and (b) awareness of the evil caused by Nature's apparent hostility to God's purpose. The first difficulty, we have seen, is solved by the mystical dictates of love. The second difficulty is a corollary to the first. The first has led to the invocation of the spirit of his friend to be near him, but

> Is there no baseness we would hide ?
> No inner vileness that we dread ?
>
> (Section li)

He is assured by the spirit of true love that in spite of his frailties, the spirit abides by him, and he asserts,

> Oh yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood.
>
> (Section liv)

Nature here signifies human nature as distinguished from external nature which Tennyson spells with capital N in the next section. Evil within man, however, does not occupy Tennyson's attention long, possibly because this evil is a matter of free will and is therefore remediable. He swiftly passes on to the more bewildering and powerful evil outside man, evil in Nature.

The intellectual doubt that is so distinctive a feature of Early Victorian poetry arises primarily from considerations of Nature's relations to man. While the Wordsworthian belief

in the healthful tranquillity of Nature is continued till the middle of the century in the works of several minor writers such as Frederick Tennyson, R. C. Trench, Isaac Williams, Mrs. Boddington, Charles Mackay and Capel Lofft[25], a darker view of the relation of Nature to man begins to appear in other poets. Arthur Hallam was asked by a friend, he writes, how long since

> I grew a dreamer, heretofore not wont
> To conjecture nothings to a mighty size,
> Or see in Nature more than Nature owns.
>
> (*Writings*, 'Meditative Fragments,' VI)

Monckton Milnes writes :

> Nature our sweet Mother,
> Can no balm impart,
> For she too is sick with the self-same smart.
> She would fain relieve us,
> Fain our grief beguile,—
> She cannot deceive us
> By her outward smile,
> For we know that Death torments her all the while.
>
> (*Poems of Many Years*, 'The Curse of Life')

And Matthew Arnold who is eager to learn from Nature, presently scorns the notion that man's life should be in harmony with Nature's.[26] While the Wordsworthians look upon Nature as a beneficent and spiritually-conscious entity, the unbelievers regard Nature as simply the conglomerate world of non-human phenomena which shows a life, if it shows any at all, of a physical, a-spiritual impulse.

Most Early Victorian poets, with all their sensibility to the phenomenal aspects of Nature, no longer found it possible to submit to the Naturalism of their predecessors. This they did not for two reasons. First, in spite of their religious doubts, they were, from the beginning, intensely conscious of Christianity and saw no reason why the faith in Jesus should be sup-

planted by a faith in Nature. One can love the beauteous aspects of Nature; such beauties may sometimes heal one's mental distress, but Nature ultimately remains distinct from and inferior to religion proper which alone can minister to one's truest and deepest spiritual needs. This sense of contrast between Naturalism and Christianity is evident in the works of several Early Victorian poets. According to William Bell Scott's *The Year of the World*, Pantheism has been once for all superseded by Christian Unity. In John Edmund Reade's *Revelations of Life*, Pantheism is shown as deficient in that tranquillity and purity of spirit which is the gift of religion alone. We may consider the attitudes of Browning, Hallam and Clough in their earliest works. During their moments of strenuous spiritual distress, they do not turn to Nature for alleviating solace as Wordsworth or Shelley or even Byron did. The psychical stability of the lover in *Pauline* is restored far more through his renewed allegiance to Christ, his admiration for Plato, Shelley and the fine arts than by Nature's blandishments. True, the perplexed inquirer in 'The Two Voices' finds at the end that

> The woods were fill'd so full with song,
> There seemed no room for sense of wrong.

But this sense of truth and love abounding comes to him primarily from the sight of the church-going people; 'Nature's living motion' is itself derived from the peculiar significance of the Sabbath-day. Arthur Hallam in 'A Farewell to the South' tries to reach Divine Love through the grandeur of Nature. There is splendid enjoyment of outdoor life in Clough's *Bothie* but no worship of Nature; indeed, as the last two paragraphs of his essay on Wordsworth show, he thought little of such worship. Even the Wordsworthians whom we have mentioned were too good Christians to translate their devotion to Nature into a cult or religion.

The second reason why these poets did not seek Naturalism was the growing idea that the life of Nature is far from holy or kindly or beneficent. A passage in Browning thus describes the struggle in Nature:

> For overlook the season's strife
> With tree and flower,—the hideous animal life,
> (Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt
> For his solution, and endure the vaunt
> Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
> Himself befooled, unable to propose
> Aught better than the fooling)....
>
> (*Sordello*, VI, 241-47)

This tortuously-constructed sentence means:—Overlook[27] the strife in vegetable life and animal life; if you wish to know why there is this struggle, you will be told that the good angel of nature will somehow finally resolve this struggle; and you will have to accept this explanation in the same way as a child who has received a taunting reply to his query, accepts it because he is himself unable to offer a better reply. —This is a far cry from the romantic idealization of Nature.

> 'This is Nature,' I said 'we are born as it were from her waters;
> Over her billows that buffet and beat us, her offspring uncared-for,
> Casting one single regard of a painful victorious knowledge,
> Into her billows that buffet and beat us as we sink and are swallowed.'
>
> (Clough, *Amours de Voyage*, III, ii)

This is Nature who delights in tormenting her offspring until they are overcome in her toils. And does the tragic end of the children modify the mother's behaviour ?

Will Nature, when her brave ones fall,
Remake her work ? or songs recall
Death's victim slain in useless strife ?

(Clough, *Poems*, 1869, p. 496)

The idea that Nature's life is one of all-pervasive hatred and strife comes out impressively in the opening lines of that undeservedly little-known but extraordinary poem of Ebenezer Jones, 'Ways of Regard':

Sharks' jaws are glittering through the eternal ocean
Now, even as ever; through its topmost seas
That mightily billow, through the secrecy
Of its abysms, where the waters bide
Omnipotently shuddering, scattering fear,
Onward they go; their illuminating teeth,
Perpetually parting; and ever through
Some dolphin's body, nervously they clench.
Hidden within the tropic forest's maze,
Now, even as ever, glares the tiger's eye
Over its victim, yellow circling light:
And there, the serpent, with his gaze, still charms
To approach, and into his distended jaws
Shiveringly hie, the gaudy chattering parrot,
Or gambolling coney and shaggy spiders there,
Catch in their webs the flitting humming birds:
And through the golden air, the humming birds flitting,
Slay countless happy insects.

(*Studies of Sensation and Event*, pp. 172-73)

A parallel description of Nature's interlinked series of destructions occurs in Tennyson:

For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal;
The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow spear'd by the shrike,

> And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder
> and prey.
> (*Maud*, IV, iv)

Jones finds that Nature's law of interlinked destruction reigns as much in the human world as in the sub-human:

> Slaughter sways
> Supremely everywhere: where man comes not,
> Beasts kill each other; where his empire holds,
> There, oh ye gods ! on richer aliment,
> Feeds slaughter, and extends.
> (Ibid. p. 173)

The idea—present in Browning, Tennyson and Clough—that Nature is not only full of strife but the strife too is useless as well as passionless receives a further edge in Ebenezer Jones's poem which shows the strife as passionless but purposeful, universal destruction in Nature prevailing in accordance with a cosmic law before which human life has no special sanctity whatever.

It is not easy to determine how far this change in attitude to Nature was the product also of the impact of recent scientific knowledge on the poetic mind. By several writers, the spread of the knowledge of science was expected to bring forth a new kind of poetry. Thus Leigh Hunt wrote in 1847:

> It is, in fact, remarkable that the growth of science, and the reappearance of a more poetical kind of poetry, have accompanied one another.
> (*Men, Women, and Books*, 'Fiction and Matter of Fact'.)

But the evidence of poetry during 1830-1850 shows that few poets had any discriminating knowledge of science,[28] while fewer still were effectively influenced by recent scientific investigations. Some idea of the nebular theory, some familiarity with the recent doctrines of geology and biology can be discerned in several poets, but judging from the imagery

used to convey this familiarity, the fabric of poetic thought shows but a feeble absorption of scientific knowledge. At the most, there is a glad welcome offered to science; the conceptual part of scientific speculations has not been integrated into the creative imagination. True, no poet accepts the Mosaic account of Creation but Browning's treatment of the idea of evolution in *Paracelsus* and R. H. Horne's in *Orion* betray only a wishful faith in the ultimate triumph of perfectibility over pain and suffering. Browning, Horne, Bell Scott, Clough, Arnold and some minor poets are aware of the evil inherent in the physical aspects of Nature, but the clearest and most intelligent presentation of the antagonism between imaginative faith and the scientific view of natural processes comes from Tennyson. Professor A. N. Whitehead's authoritative opinion on this matter is:

> Tennyson is the mouthpiece of the attempts of the waning romantic movement in the second quarter of the nineteenth century to come to terms with science. By this time the two elements in modern thought had disclosed their fundamental divergence by their jarring interpretations of the course of nature and the life of man.... There are opposing visions of the world, and both of them command his assent by appeals to ultimate intuitions from which there seems no escape. Tennyson goes to the heart of the difficulty. It is the problem of mechanism which appalls him,
>
> 'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run.'
>
> This line states starkly the whole philosophical problem implicit in the poem.
>
> (*Science and the Modern World*, Penguin ed. pp. 95-96)

Professor Whitehead finds that this crucial philosophical problem, implicit in *In Memoriam*, is, however, avoided by Tennyson in the work that touches on almost every religious and scientific problem of the times. If Tennyson is reluctant or

insensitive and incompetent to probe into this problem of problems, he nevertheless, more than any other contemporary poet, more than most people interested in current intellectual developments, has followed the progress of scientific knowledge closely. At Cambridge, his tutor was Whewell whose rejection of the evolutionary theory of Creation in favour of the Mosaic must have made the pupil aware of both sides to the question. At Somersby, between 1833 and 1835, Tennyson's weekly work included five days' study of chemistry, botany, electricity, animal physiology and mechanics. In 1837, he was 'deeply immersed' in Lyell's *Geology*.[29] In November 1844, he wrote to Moxon, the publisher:

> I want you to get me a book which I see advertised in the *Examiner:* it seems to contain many speculations with which I have been familiar for years, and on which I have written more than one poem. The book is called *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation.*
>
> (*Memoir*, i, pp. 222-23)

His poetry from *Poems by Two Brothers*, *The Devil and the Lady*, and the unpublished early poems onwards, shows considerable knowledge of natural science and some of his scientific allusions were not understood by his contemporaries. For instance, the reviewer of *In Memoriam* in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* of August 1850 enquired what the meaning is of 'the crimson-circled star' that falls 'into her father's grave', an image in section lxxxix which was afterwards explained by A.C. Bradley in his *Commentary*. The depth of Tennyson's knowledge and his poetic use of the theory of evolution long before Darwin's great work was published has been carefully studied by Lionel Stevenson.[30] For our purpose, it is relevant to consider here that although the idea of evolution is present in certain works of other writers too, such as Browning's *Paracelsus*, and in several poems of Tennyson himself earlier than *In Memoriam*,[31] it is in

this latter work that the idea of the contraposition between God's purpose and Nature's process is definitely mooted.

Tennyson is not disturbed because the Genesis account of Creation and Archbishop Ussher's chronology are belied by the evidence of science; he was too devoted to facts to be so. The son-biographer refers[32] to a story told by the poet to a young lady of a Brahmin who broke a microscope because it showed creatures killing each other: telling the story, the poet commented, 'significant, as if we could destroy facts by refusing to see them.' In *In Memoriam*, the poet is profoundly stirred when it appears to him that the colossal wastefulness of Nature and her apathy equally for the species and the individual strike at the very root of man's idea of God's loving and purposeful creation of organic life. He believes

> That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroy'd,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete;
>
> That not a worm is cloven in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserve another's gain.
> (Section liv)

Nothing that lives, lives in vain. The emphasis is, however, on man whose age-long purpose and prayer, love of and suffering for the True and the Just, Tennyson describes in language of deep passion. Take away this emphasis, and man, seen in the perspective of Nature's pitiless process, seems no better than 'dragons of the prime that tare each other in the slime.'

Incidentally, Tennyson's revulsion from the notion of the biological affinity between man and the lower animals expresses itself in numerous comparisons that are patently far more

significant than the common abusive analogy between man and beasts.

And owning but a little more
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor.
('The Two Voices')

I, to herd with narrow foreheads,
vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures,
like a beast with lower pains!
('Locksley Hall')

For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain.
('Morte d'Arthur')

Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and the tiger die.
(*In Memoriam*, Section cxviii)

From whatever source Tennyson might have received this idea of man's animal origin—from Erasmus Darwin perhaps—it powerfully shook his Christian belief that man was made in the image of God, and his own intuitive perception of the inalienable divinity of man. Unable to brush aside the evidence of science, he passionately loathes the animal part of man and urges that man should outgrow that part.

Like the problem of immortality, the problem of evil—both within and outside man—is solved not by reason but by the voice of inmost faith. When the contemplation of Nature's evil wrings out of him the excruciating cry, 'O life as futile, then, as frail !', the poet invokes the soothing and blissful voice of the dead friend since his own rationalistic attempts to find

an answer or redress to the cry are halted by the impenetrable veil of mystery that lies beyond knowledge. He desires peace; the song of woe, he finds, is after all an earthly song (lvii); he lulls his trouble-tossed fancy with love's song until a happy thought flutters up (lxv); moonlight falling on his bed and on the tablet of his friend's grave invests these with a mystic glory (lxvii). Henceforth, his imagination remains wholly charged with thoughts about his friend, the trouble of his youth having now passed off. He reads his collection of his friend's letters that vigorously dispel doubts, and

> So word by word, and line by line
> The dead man touch'd me fiom the past,
> And all at once it seem'd at last
> The living soul was flash'd on mine.
>
> (Section xcv)

Intellectual doubts no longer assail him since his mystic experiences have enabled him to distinguish between Knowledge and Wisdom (cxiv); belief absolute in love has been the solvent of 'our ghastliest doubt':

> I found him not in world or sun,
> Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
> Nor thro' the questions men may try,
> The petty cobwebs we have spun:
>
> If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
> I heard a voice 'believe no more'
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'
>
> (Section cxxiv)

Love is and was my Lord and King,
    And in his presence I attend
    To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
    And will be, tho' as yet I keep
    Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
    Who moves about from place to place,
    And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

(Section cxxvi)

This is the 'love that rose on stronger wings unpalsied when he met with Death.' Thus, once again, in the inner rhythmic pattern of the poem, doubt and faith stand co-regnant although faith in the mystic principle of intuitive love corresponds more nearly to Tennyson's final intellective position.

VI

The road to faith Tennyson found in neither Pantheism nor Paley's worn-out but still popular arguments. Affirmation came to him through intuition, through rather the sovereign power of the creative imagination. To Emily Sellwood, he wrote in 1839:

> Why has God created souls knowing they would sin and suffer? a question unanswerable...Let us be silent, for we know nothing of these things, and we trust there is One who knows all.
>
> (*Memoir*,i, p. 270)

On another occasion, he is reported to have exclaimed:

> Yet God *is* love, transcendent, all-pervading! We do not get *this* faith from Nature or the world. If we look at Nature alone, full of perfection and imperfection, she tells us that God is disease, murder and rapine. We get this from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognizes that there is not one fruitless pang, just as there is not one lost good.
>
> (*Memoir*, i, p. 374)

We get this from ourselves—the faith is intuitional and is remarkably similar to Hallam's:

> Can man by searching find out God? I believe not . . . what is it to me that I cannot disprove the bare logical possibility of my whole nature being fallacious? To seek for a certainty above certainty, an evidence beyond necessary belief, is the very lunacy of scepticism: we must trust our own faculties, or we can put no trust in anything . .
>
> (*Writings*, 'Theodicaea Novissima', p. 201)

Hallam too speaks of trusting 'our own faculties'. He too

had passed, it would seem, earlier than Tennyson, through the valley of the shadow of doubt; 'in many a subtle question versed' he had 'touch'd a jarring lyre at first' but had 'fought his doubts and gather'd strength' until, even as Tennyson did, 'he came at length to find a stronger faith his own' (xcvi). In 'Theodicaea Novissima', he raises the question: 'Here is a world overrun with sin and suffering; how did they get here except by Divine permission ?', and reaches the conclusion that calamities are the condition 'without which the very being of a holy God would be a contradiction.' He builds his faith on the affections of the human heart:

> We have not the slightest reason for supposing that the operations of our thoughts approach nearer to the modes of Divine Knowledge, than the affections of our hearts to that Love, which God is.
>
> (*Writings*, 'Theodicaea Novissima', p. 212)

> It is by the heart, not by the head, that we must all be convinced of the two great fundamental truths, the reality of Love and the reality of Evil.
>
> (Ibid. letter to Emily Tennyson, p. 199)

The close resemblance of this faith to Tennyson's explains what really the poet had lost by his friend's death; not the 'Amaryllis of the Chancery bar' nor just a very dear college chum or a prospective brother-in-law, but one who was the living symbol, as it were, of his own deepest faith. Considered in the light of Hallam's opinions and Tennyson's own letters to Emily Sellwood, the disturbed sections of *In Memoriam* should be recognized as a surface-current of the poet's thoughts that urges us to search for the undercurrent of faith deep down.

Of immense help to Tennyson in arriving at this faith is his consciousness of the vastness of time and space, of the changelessness beyond mutability. This consciousness appears even in one of the earliest poems, 'Chorus'. As a boy, he is

reported to have advised Frederick Tennyson[33] to 'think of Herschel's great star-patches' to get over shyness. In *In Memoriam* he writes:

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
And in a moment set thy face
Where all the starry heavens of space
Are sharpen'd to a needle's end.

(section lxxvi)

Extracts from his letters to Emily Sellwood written in 1839 show how this consciousness was absorbed into his mature thoughts:

The far future has been my world always.

That made me count the less of sorrows when I caught a glimpse of the sorrowless Eternity.

We must bear or we must die. It is easier perhaps to die, but infinitely less noble. The immortality of man disdains and rejects the thought, the immortality of man to which the cycles and aeons are as hours and as days.

Annihilate within yourself these two dreams of Space and Time. To me often the far-off world seems nearer than the present, for in the present is always something unreal and indistinct, but the other seems a good solid planet, rolling round its green and paradises to the harmony of more steadfast laws. There steams up from about me mists of weakness, or sin, or despondency, and roll between me and the far planet, but it is there still.

(*Memoir*, i, pp. 168-172)

One is reminded of Browning's differentiation in *Sordello* between Time and Eternity.[34] This imaginative transcendency over time and space ratifies Tennyson's intuitional hope and faith. When Lord Keynes said, 'In the long run we are all dead,' he was preoccupied with an immediate and foreshortened

view of things. But it is the elevating vision of the long run that enables Tennyson to cherish hopes for the present and the immediate future.

> And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
> About empyreal heights of thought,
> And came on that which is, and caught
> The deep pulsations of the world.
>
> (section xcv)

Tennyson is not an escapist visionary; his imaginative projection into the far future brings him to a consideration of 'that which is,' 'the deep pulsations of the world'. His hope of the soul's immortal state is entwined with a hope for mortal society, his optimism is based on 'the large excitement' of the coming years. Inspired by this two-fold hope, Tennyson refuses to shut himself from his kind; he must merge his 'private sorrow's barren song' into the 'larger hope' for mankind. And thus faith in divinity and secular faith are bound together.

This optimism was a part of the ruling Victorian faith in Progress described by J. B. Bury:

> For the hope of an ultimate happy state on the planet to be enjoyed by future generations—or of some state, at least, that may relatively be considered happy—has replaced, as a social power, the hope of felicity in another world.
>
> (*The Idea of Progress*, 1920, Preface, p. viii)

The idea of human Progress then is a theory which involves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future. It is based on an interpretation which regards man as slowly advancing...in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this progress will continue indefinitely...[and] justify the whole process of civilization...There is also a further implication. The process must be the necessary outcome of the psychical and social nature of man; it must not be at the mercy of any external will; otherwise there would be no gua-

rantee of its continuance and its issue, and the idea of Progress would lapse into the idea of Providence.

(Ibid. p. 5)

The idea of Progress had gained considerable ground in the eighteenth century and Shelley, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, was an ardent exponent of the creed of secular perfectibility. During the second quarter of the century, the idea became so generally accepted as to be a common basis of literary thought. Social and political developments and the spread of knowledge, in spite of aberrations in details, were such as to inspire many people with a sense of glory in Progress. All Early Victorian poets, excepting P. J. Bailey, A. H. Clough and Ebenezer Jones, are believers in Progress and we seldom meet with any real scepticism about the secular future of mankind. Belief in Progress as expressed by these poets has two aspects: one that looks forward to the future—sometimes to the distant future—and the other that is concerned with the progressive developments in contemporary society. Along with the journalists and the public men of the age, the poets of the Early Victorian period were alive to material improvements and what was universally called 'the march of intellect', but a self-complacent exultation over things as they were is seldom to be found in their works. The huge mass of verse on the contemporary social situation—consider, for example, the works of Ebenezer Elliott, J. M. Morgan, Capel Lofft, Thomas Cooper—is definitely critical of existing conditions, and F. H. Doyle's query in *The Two Destinies*—'What does the vaunted Progress cost ?'—is representative of the average poet's feelings about the dangerous anomalies of hierarchical, unegalitarian society. The visions of perfectibility in the works of Browning, R. H. Horne and Bell Scott are not cherished in terms of the immediate situation of their railway age. The thwarted lover of 'Locksley Hall', ranting against social wants and social

lies, visualizes—with 'jaundiced eyes'—the slowly-creeping movement of science and of hunger but is excited at the same time by the vision of the world of the future. In 'The Golden Year', Leonard speaks of 'the fair new forms that float about the threshold of an age' while his friend James rejoins,

> it lies so far away,
> Not in our time, not in our children's time,
> 'Tis like the second world to us that live.
> (Tennyson, 'The Golden Year')

In R. H. Horne's *Orion*, the eponymous hero's final address envisages generations carrying on the hard struggle for perfectibility. Charles Mackay's popular song similarly refers to the social uplift of the future:

> There's a good time coming, boys,
> A good time coming:
> We may not live to see the day,
> But earth shall glisten in the ray
> Of the good time coming.
> (*Voices from the Crowd*, 'Wait a little longer')

And Mrs. Browning finds

> that the elemental
> New springs of life are gushing everywhere
> To cleanse the watercourses, and prevent all
> Concrete obstructions which infest the air!
> That earth's alive, and gentle or ungentle
> Motions within her, signify but growth!—
> The ground swellest greenest o'er the labouring moles.
> (*Casa Guidi Windows*, ii, 761-67)

Her optimism relates to the future—the distant future at that—not to the present, for, the present, as Mrs. Browning's sarcastic and poignant remarks on the Crystal Palace aver, is a time of 'muddle and pain'. A correct and fair appraisal of the Early Victorian poetic attitude to life is not possible

unless we understand the bi-focal nature of its optimism. Most of these poets are stern critics of the present-day iniquities while they believe that, regarded in the wider perspective of the slow and laborious process of history, the future is hopeful. Hardy's comment on Browning's optimism may be considered in this connexion:[35]

The longer I live the more does Browning's character seem among the *leading* puzzles of the nineteenth century. How could smug Christian optimism worthy of a dissenting grocer find a place inside a man who was so vast a seer and a feeler on neutral ground?...One day I had a theory which you will call horrible—that perceiving he would obtain in a stupid *world* no hearing as a poet if he gave himself in his entirety, he professed a certain mass of commonplace opinion as a bait to get the rest of him taken. Well, 'The Riddle of Browning' is what I want to read from your pen.

So far as it is Christian, Browning shares his optimism with countless Christians before and after him, grocers and artists alike, and this part of Hardy's criticism being levelled more against traditional Christianity than against Browning, is extra-literary. But it is only fair to recognize that the optimism of Browning's poetry is not merely theological but largely secular too and that it is not smug. Indeed, Browning has so often and so penetratingly analyzed the nature of evil that a critic has found it possible to study 'the saving grace of Browning's pessimism'.[36] In their vision of secular progress, Browning and his fellow poets of the Early Victorian period are not complacent with things as they are. Indeed, the very concept of Progress postulating an ever-perfecting process working upon the imperfection of every moment prevents them from being satisfied with a static view of the present. In these poets, the 'principle of duty to posterity'—as Bury states the general proposition—'is a direct corollary of the idea of Progress.'[37] Their optimism is a fine faith in the future, a heroic and selfish

faith that though they will not live to enjoy it, their work will enable unborn generations to enjoy the fruits of perfectibility. This optimistic prevision, writ large on the works of the major poets as well as the minor, has its consummate poetic expression in Tennyson.

It is notable that Tennyson's vision of Progress is intermixed with suggestions of dominantly, if not exclusively, British progress. When the hero of 'Locksley Hall' dips into the future, the wonderful vision that he sees is composed characteristically of British mercantilism and parliamentarism, while his proposed romantic migration brings into prominence the expanding British empire. The golden year (in the poem of that title) will witness ships 'blowing havenward with silks, and fruits, and spices clear of toll', referring to free-trade. Again, the phrase 'all is well' which marks the transition from section cxxvi of *In Memoriam* ('Love is and was my Lord and King') to section cxxvii ('The red-fool fury of the Seine') epitomizes the chauvinistic anti-climax of a beautiful idea. It must nevertheless be admitted that though by the nature of things an idea loses some of its lustre when reduced to concrete and time-barred terms, the inspiring power of the idea may still remain. Shelley's dream of perfectibility, by acquiring in Tennyson's poetry a concrete shape set against a measurable historical horizon, may sound a trifle parochial but has not thereby lost its dynamic inspiration. Indeed, Tennyson's treatment of the idea of Progress is throughout distinguished by the practicalness which appears to have been a notable feature of his personal character. By virtue of the 'lesser faith that seems the course of human things', lesser than death-defying faith in immortality, the poet knows that

vast eddies in the flood
Of onward time shall yet be made,
And throned races may degrade.

(section cxxviii)

This vision of a world—possibly not very distant—where the conflict of societies will have been resolved, where 'the individual withers and the world is more and more,' where man progresses towards the fuller expression of the divine within him, is a notable element of Tennyson's poetry—the concentrated expression of amorphous contemporary aspirations—an element that should appeal to the public of today as emphatically as it appealed to the poet's own generation.

VII

After a century since its publication, a study of *In Memoriam* made against the background of contemporary tendencies and in the context of his letters and Arthur Hallam's works, should lead to the critical judgment that here we reach the consummation of Early Victorian poetic thought and expression. Tennyson has often been compared, not unhappily, with Pope. In both poets an astonishing mastery of language is wedded to a firm grasp of significant current thoughts. That Tennyson's poetic vision is bound by the horizon of his times will hardly be regarded as a blemish by any judicious critic; also, no critic can fail to see that despite the understandable anti-Victorianism of the early decades of the present century, Tennyson is not so remote from our times as to be an unhelpful guide in our wrestles with the literary problems of this harassed age. To deprecate Tennyson's ultimate emergence to faith is to forget that faith alone lends dynamics to life, that life can never be sustained without affirmation. What can however legitimately abide the question of the critic is the nature of this faith, the process that leads to a poet's world-view. Tennyson reached the everlasting yea through the everlasting no because his intellectual integrity and penetration would not allow him to rest content with any facile faith. To an age of disintegrating and uncertain values, the doubting part of Tennyson's mind may seem more attractive than the believing part, but an over-emphasis of this doubt is fair neither to the poet nor to the present age. Besides, Tennyson's faith is far more comprehensive than a religious faith which is only a part of it; it is a faith at once religious and secular and yet something

deeper than both being fundamentally a faith in the sovereign power of the Creative Imagination.

In an age of rapid industrialization and swelling national income, Early Victorian poets realized that it was not enough to preach the gospel of Work. Men must know what they work for. The problem of knowledge, therefore, occupies the attention of several of these poets and although we cannot expect these poetic approaches to the problem to be as systematic as the approaches of the philosophers proper, we observe an earnest[38] integrity in their attempts. A principal question in the content of Early Victorian poetry is, what is the aim and scope of knowledge? Browning discusses the question at greater length and with a wider and subtler array of arguments than any other poet. The question is the central theme of *Paracelsus* and the preponderant problem of the climax of *Sordello*. The rôle of knowledge, Browning tells us, is to elevate the whole human race to a state of egalitarian perfection; the course of history tends to the increasing prevalence of knowledge in the conduct of human affairs until that stage of perfectibility is reached where mankind will follow knowledge impelled by an instinctive love of it rather than by any extraneous power. In R. H. Horne's *Orion*, Artemis teaching the hero 'shewed the way rightly his complex knowledge to employ.' But the Early Victorians whilst they know the power of knowledge as the elevating impulse of the race know also the limits of its scope. Knowledge, they believe, cannot and must not stand alone since it is not the sovereign faculty of man. The well-known lines of *In Memoriam* are relevant in this context:

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see. (Prologue)

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix

> With men and prosper! Who shall fix
> Her pillars? Let her work prevail.
> .. .. ..
> Let her know her place;
> She is the second, not the first.
> .. .. ..
> For she is earthly of the mind,
> But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
> (section cxiv)

The province and business of Knowledge is to investigate the laws of physical life and indicate man's relation to them: the higher and more enduring province is that of man's spiritual life, that rarefied and inalienable intuition that is uniquely his. Tennyson here once again gives a distilled expression to a widespread contemporary belief. The limitation of the scope of Knowledge that he accepts is the theme of Egeria's final advice to Julian in Charles Mackay's poem *Egeria, or the Spirit of Nature* (1850); it is the substance too of the distinction between knowledge and the soul's inner vision made by Samiasa in Abraham Heraud's ambitious pseudo-epic *The Judgement of the Flood* (1834); it is the lesson preached in Aubrey de Vere's 'A Tale of the Modern Times' in *The Wildenses* (1842): Lyremmos in William Bell Scott's *The Year of the World* (1846) never forgets his mystic heritage. The standpoint of the poets is in broad outline the same. Browning's basic ideas resemble Tennyson's. The dying Paracelsus declares the 'worth of love in man's estate'; love (equivalent to Tennyson's Wisdom) precedes power (Tennyson's Knowledge) and increases ever as power increases. Mere knowledge, divorced from love, seems to Paracelsus as 'the wild nursling of his breast'—a picturesque romantic phrase that anticipates Tennyson's classical image of the 'wild Pallas from the brain of Demos'. In the synthesized view of life held by these poets, knowledge goes with action, while knowledge itself yields to the higher faculty of the soul

called love, wisdom, the inner vision and so forth. Tennyson sings an hallelujah to

> The love that rose on stronger wings,
> Unpalsied when he met with Death.
> (section cxxviii)

When the reviewer of *In Memoriam* in the *Athenaeum* commented that 'With Mr. Tennyson the argument for trust in the future seems often to rest chiefly on the mental disposition to trust,' he unwittingly paid homage to the poetic imagination which refuses to accept the physical fact as the last word in human affairs. Early Victorian poets do not deny the potency or value of facts but they place the spiritual values of life on a higher level. Their faith is conditional: life can be and shall be beautiful and joyful if the facts of the material and phenomenal world be penetrated and elevated by spiritual values. Most speculations and didacticism of Early Victorian poetry tend ultimately to this assertion of the superiority of intuitive truths over rational analyses, an assertion that is a natural consequence of their conception of poetry. A minor and forgotten poet of the period thus emphasizes the authority of the poetic intuition:

> Where is that mysterious stone
> Which the Chymists sigh to own?
> Poets found it long ago,
> And they test creation by it;
> But in spite of searching so
> Not a man of fact comes nigh it.
> (E. H. Burrington, *Revelations of the Beautiful*, p. 18)

> Truth and fact may live apart,
> Like the silver dew and rain;
> Truth speaks stories to the heart,
> Facts prate logic to the brain.
> (Ibid. p. 26)

The Early Victorian concept of poetry is based on a belief in the supreme power of poetic feelings; what the poet feels to be true is the highest human truth to which he must give expression. It is a lofty claim made for the poetic experience, the poet's imaginative faculty and faith being exalted above everything else, and the faith in *In Memoriam*, comprising a rhythmic pattern of hopes and doubts, testifies exultingly to this contemporary faith in the sovereignty of the poetic imagination.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

'GROWING PAINS'—A STUDY OF BROWNING'S *PAULINE*

1. 'To the best of my belief no single copy of the original edition of *Pauline* found a buyer; the book was undoubtedly 'still-born'.' Letter to T. J. Wise, 1886, *Letters*, p. 251.

2. W. L. Phelps in *MLN*, May 1932, p. 292.

3. To T. J. Wise, *Letters*, p. 256.

4. Orr, *Life*, p. 102.

5. Ibid. p. 57.

6. Mill's jottings have not been published in full. T. L. Hood in *Letters*, p. 366, quotes the long, continuous criticism of Mill. For the short, marginal comments, I have depended upon W. L. Phelps's 'Notes on Browning's *Pauline*', *MLN*, May 1932, pp. 297-98. For a Note on the date of Browning's holograph in the Mill-copy *Pauline*, see Appendix I.

7. W. M. Rossetti gives the date of this letter as 1850 in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Letters and Memoir*, I, p. 115. This letter seems to be lost; at least I have been unable to trace it anywhere in the records of Browning and Rossetti. References to this letter—all almost identically phrased—occur in (i) Browning's letter to William Sharp, *Letters*, p. 220; (ii) W. M. Rossetti's *Some Reminiscences*, pp. 233-34; (iii) *Rossetti Memoir*, p. 115. Browning in the letter to Sharp remembers that the Rossetti letter was addressed to him at Florence, while W. M. Rossetti says that Browning was then at Venice.

As these pages were going to the press, I happened to find the following sentence in *Dearest Isa: Robert Browning's Letters to Isabella Blagden*, ed. Edward C. McAleer (Austine and Edinburgh, 1951), p. 99, note 7 on Letter 46, a sentence that had not caught my attention when I had read the volume first some years ago: 'On 17 October 1847, he (D. G. Rossetti) wrote asking Browning whether he had written *Pauline*, since Rossetti had noticed phrases in *Pauline* repeated in Browning's avowed work (Sotheby, p. 57, No. 266).' —So the letter exists!

8. *Letters*, p. 220.

9. Letter to W. J. Fox, Orr, *Life*, p. 52.

10. Orr, *Handbook*, p. 11.

11. Bernice Fox in 'Revision in Browning's *Paracelsus*' (*MLN*, March

1940, pp. 195-197) notes the following classes of textual changes arrived at in the final edition of 1888 :—

(A) Mechanical revisions—punctuation, capitalization, spelling.

(B) Stylistic—(i) condensation, (ii) expansion, (iii) additions of new phrases. Compare my findings for *Pauline*, pp. 15-16 *ante*.

12. There is a word-collection in *N. & Q.*, vol. 157, pp. 273-292. Many useful observations are scattered throughout A. K. Cook's *Commentary on The Ring and The Book* (London, 1920).

13. Consider, for example, words like *chasm* (676), *emerald* (755), *dark hair*, *dim* (two frequent adjectives in *Pauline*), *splendour* (frequent in *Paracelsus*), *trackless* (178 & *Par.*, I, 560). John Livingstone Lowes, *PMLA*, 1940, pp. 203-206) says that these words which occur in *The Witch of Atlas* were borrowed by Shelley from *Endymion*. In the same journal, 1941, pp. 479-494, David Lee Clark argues that for these words and many more, Shelley was certainly not indebted to Keats; he suggests that having a keen verbal sense and a retentive memory, Shelley unconsciously drew these words and imagery from a variety of sources among whom may be mentioned Virgil, Euripides, Shakespeare, Spenser, Pliny, Rabelais. As against these attempts to trace specific sources, I would suggest that the occurrence of words of this kind in any poet need not be construed as indebtedness; these belong to the commonwealth of the Romantic poetic diction.

14. See J. K. Bonnel, 'Touch Images in the poetry of Browning', *PMLA*, XXXVII, 1922.

15. How important the idea of light is in Browning's philosophy is revealed in the following extract from Professor Alexander's 'Analysis of *Sordello*', quoted in Berdoe's *Cyclopaedia*, p. 568. Professor Alexander gives a summary of axioms on a Theory of Will-Power from the work of an occult writer, Eliphas Levi, whose teaching was largely imbibed by the poet.

> Axiom 13. Light is an electric fire, which is placed by man at the disposition of the will; it illuminates those who know how to make use of it, and burns those who abuse it.
>
> Axiom 14. The empire of the world is the empire of light.

16. G. H.W. Rylands, *Words and Poetry* (London, 1928), p. 62.

17. Cf. Lilian Harlands Hornstein. 'Analysis of Imagery : A Critique of Literary Method', *PMLA*., 1942, pp. 638-53.

18. *MLN*, May 1932, p. 295.

19. Browning's Essay on Shelley, in 'The Percy Reprints', No 3, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith, Oxford, 1937, p. 63.

20. Ibid. p. 66.

21. Idem.

22. W. G. Collingwood, *The Life and Works of John Ruskin* (London, 1893), I, p. 201.

23. Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. Brett-Smith, Percy Reprints, No. 3, p. 56.

24. *Life*, p. 184. The sentence quoted from Griffin also occurs on this page.

25. *Par.*, II, 433, II, 460, II, 465.

26. *Eight Victorian Poets*; I quote from 'English Critical Essays, Twentieth Century', O. U. P., p. 387.

27. *Essay on Shelley*, p. 68.

28. Consider the different attitudes of Browning and Mrs Browning towards Napoleon III and the underground politics of Italy.

29. Griffin, *Life*, p. 54.

30. Orr, *Life*, p. 40.

31. G. R. Elliott, *Anglia*, 1909, p. 99.

32. *Life*, p. 35 ; Griffin quotes her opinion approvingly on p. 44, *Life*.

33. *Life*, p. 35; Mrs Orr (p. 35) seems to refer to the same woman.

'GAUDY BUTTERFLIES' —THE VERSE OF THE ENGLISH 'ANNUALS'

1. For details see F. W. Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift Books: A Bibliography with a Descriptive Introduction* (Boston, 1912).

2. Sometimes it was probably the other way about, plates illustrating the letterpress; see *Friendship's Offering*, 1833, Charles Whitehead's poem 'Viola' with picture drawn by H. Corbould and engraved by T. Garner, and ibid. 1834, Mrs. Richardson's prose story 'The Ball-Room' with picture drawn by J. Stephanoff and engraved by S. S. Smith.

3. The phrases occur respectively in the *Athenaeum*, 1846, p. 1318; *New Monthly Magazine*, xlii (1834), p. 377; *Monthly Chronicle*, Jan. 1839, p. 63; *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov. 1834, p. 709; *Athenaeum*, 1833, p. 826.

4. See *Monthly Chronicle*, Jan. 1839, Jan. 1840. But Annual editors could

defend themselves capably; see the Advertisement to the *Literary Souvenir*, 1831, edited by Alaric A. Watts, and the preface to the same Annual for 1832.

5. *Monthly Magazine*, Nov. 1842, p. 554. The sneer contrasts with the pathetic statement in the preface to *Forget Me Not* for 1837.

6. The only poet of note who never contributed to an Annual up to 1850 is Browning, a fact that may be taken as a measure of his unpopularity in the early decades of his career. His 'Ben Karshook's Wisdom' was published in the *Keepsake*, 1851.

7. The *Keepsake* particularly was proud of its aristocratic writers, and the *Athenaeum* (1831, p. 736) remarked: 'The contributors are from the peerage list: we have two Countesses, nine lords, five who write themselves "the Honourable", one Archdeacon, two Baronets, and three Members of Parliament.' Thackeray had probably the *Keepsake* in mind when he wrote thus in *Pendennis*, ch. xxxi:

> . . .a beautiful gilt volume called the 'Spring Annual', edited by the Lady Violet Lebas, and numbering among its contributors not only the most eminent but the most fashionable poets of our time. Young Lord Dodo's poems first appeared in this miscellany—the Honourable Percy Popjoy whose chivalrous ballads have obtained him such a reputation—Bedwin Sands's Eastern Ghazuls, and many more of the works of our young nobles were first given to the world in the 'Spring Annual.'

8. The most notable case of such attachment is that of Landor who regularly wrote for the *Keepsake* and the *Book of Beauty* while these were edited by his friend the Countess of Blessington; see his letters to her in 'The Landor-Blessington Papers', *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Nicoll and Wise, vol. i (London, 1895-96).

9. Editors of Annuals themselves regarded some of these works as curiosities; the *Forget Me Not* for 1830 printed Byron's 'To my dear Mary Anne' as 'the first attempt of the late Lord Byron's that is known to be extant'; the same Annual for 1844 printed a poem of James Thomson not till then printed, and a letter of Byron to the Ettrick Shepherd.

10. Charles Swain, of whom Southey, according to the *D.N.B.*, said that 'if ever man was born to be a poet, Swain was', presents the same view of poetry in lines like 'Affection makes her glowing heart its [i.e. poetry's] throne' (*The Mind and Other Poems*, 1841, 'The Mind', I, st. v) and 'What is Life without Affection ? 'its existence without light', *Dramatic Chapters, Poems and Songs*, 1847, 'The Poetical and the Practical'.

11. 'To ***', *Friendship's Offering*, 1839.

12. Cf. *Friendship's Offering*, 1832, 'A Dream of Fairy Land' in six fyttes and L'Envoi.

13. *Pringle's Poetical Works*, Memoir by Leitch Richie (London, 1836), p. cxlii.

14. See *Tennyson: A Memoir*, by his son, i. 162.

15. Among the numerous works on this theme, the following stand out: Browning's *Sordello*, iii, the personal digression; Tennyson's unpublished lines quoted in *William Allingham: A Diary*, p. 303; Mrs. Browning, 'The Cry of the Human'; James White, *The Village Poor-House* (2nd ed., 1832); Mrs. Norton, *The Child of the Islands* (1845); F. H. Doyle, *The Two Destinies* (1844).

Revolt against social iniquities inspired Ebenezer Elliott's *Corn Law Rhymes* (1833), Capel Lofft's *Ernest* (first printed in 1839 but published in 1868), Ebenezer Jones' *Studies of Sensation and Event* (1843).

16. Cf. for example, Mrs. Norton, *A Voice from the Factories* (1836) and *The Child of the Islands* (1845); Eliza Cook, *Poems*, second series (1845); Anon, *The Times, a Poetical Jeu d'esprit* (1839); Anon., *The Factory Child* (1831); Mrs. Browning, 'the Cry of the Children'.

17. 'The Rich and the Poor', *Forget Me Not*, 1838.

18. Cf. Mrs. Ellis, *The Sons of the Soil* (1840), Bk. XIII; James White, *The Village Poor-House*, Part III, song of Bill Hervey, the pauper-emigrant; Charles Mackay, 'The Emigrant's Farewell to England' and 'The Scottish Emigrant's Farewell to Yarrow' in *The Hope of the World* (1840); Mackay's 'An Emigrant's Farewell' in *Voices from the Crowd* (1846).

19. *Monthly Chronicle*, Jan. 1839, p. 65.

20. 'Love', by Miss E. Scaife, *Forget Me Not*, 1841.

21. *Friendship's Offering*, 1839, p. 174, by J. C. S.

22. Cf. R. F. Housman's 'The Woodland Brook', Delta's (pseudonym of David Macbeth Moir) 'Thorny-Bank Farm', Cornelius Webbe's 'A Summer Scene', and Thomas Miller's 'The Happy Valley', published in *Friendship's Offering* for 1833, 1835, 1838, and 1841 respectively.

23. The verse-tales occur in *Keepsake*, 1842, 1843, *Friendship's Offering*, 1841; the prose tales in *Forget Me Not*, 1834, 1842, 1854.

24. For example, the *Amulet* was edited by Mrs. S. C. Hall, 1826-36; *Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrap-Book* by L. E. L. (1832-9), L. E. L. and Mary Howitt (1840), Mary Howitt (1841), Mrs. Ellis (1844-5), Mrs. Norton (1846-9); the *Keepsake* by Mrs. Norton (1836), Lady E. S. Wortley (1837, 1840), the Countess of Blessington (1841-50), Miss E. Power (1851-7).

25. 'Literary Lays: The Blue Belles of England' (*Athenaeum*, 1831, p. 136) gives a list in ironical light verse of the contemporary poetesses of England.

In the *Quarterly Review* (Sept. 1840), a reviewer considered nine poetesses and twenty books in an article on 'Modern English Poetesses'.

26. The first quotation is from the *Monthly Magazine*, Aug. 1840, p. 167, and the second from the *Athenaeum*, 1836, p. 371.

27. *Modern Poetry: a Satire* (London, 1831), p. 95.

28. The first quotation is from the *Athenaeum* (1829, p. 639) review of *Friendship's Offering* for the year; the second and third quotations are from prefaces to *Friendship's Offering*, 1829, 1833.

29. Allan Cunningham, writing a series of essays entitled 'Biographical and Critical History of the Literature of the Last Fifty Years', concluded thus in the last paragraph on Poetry :'We have . . . fewer learned allusions; less classical copyism; nor is our verse swelling with gods and goddesses; Venus and Cupid no longer manage the affairs of love.' (*Athenaeum*, 1833, p. 773.)

30. Barry Cornwall, 'The Conquest of Man', *Friendship's Offering*, 1834.

31. Definite data regarding the commercial aspect of Annuals are not available. The preface to the *Literary Souvenir* for 1826 states that 6,000 copies of the 1825 volume had sold; some other volumes of the same Annual sold to the extent of 14,000 or 15,000 copies, and Alaric Watts, the editor, is said to have estimated the amount spent on 14 volumes of his Annual between 1824 and 1837 as £50,000; see *The Maclise Portrait Gallery of Illustrious Characters*, ed. William Bates (London, 1873), p. 321. That gives over £3,500 as the cost of production of a single volume. The preface to the *Keepsake*, of a richer make than most Annuals, states that the sum of 11,000 guineas was spent on the volume. Prices varied; while the average Annual was priced at 12*s*., the price of the *Keepsake* was a guinea. If then an Annual like the *Literary Souvenir* sold less than 8,000 copies, the sale proceeds would barely equal the expenditure, and the *Keepsake* must sell at least 12,000 copies. Assuming 30 to be the average number of Annuals per year and 10,000 the number of copies to be sold per annum of a successful Annual, the total number of Annuals to be sold per year was 300,000. It is doubtful if there were so many readers, or even half that number, of this particular literary species in English speaking countries.

The wide market which the Annuals had at the beginning was adversely affected when the Americans began to produce their Annuals; the Indian market too was temporarily damaged by the publication of the *Bengal Annual* (1830–4). Already in 1834 the *New Monthly Magazine* (vol. xlii, p. 377) stated authoritatively that Annuals 'are by no means profitable speculations.'

32. The hey-day of Annuals covers the period between the slump years, 1826 and 1842; for an account of the slump, see Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books* London, 1939, p. 446.

33. A representative attitude of the superior writer to the Annual is that of Tennyson; see his letters to Monckton Milnes (*Tennyson, A Memoir*, by his son, i. pp. 157-60).

34. It was during the thirties that *Blackwood's*, the *New Monthly Magazine*, and the *Monthly Repository* came to be conducted as modern magazines. 'The modern magazine —that is, a miscellany of original works of the imagination, like the *New Monthly Magazine* of the 1840's and the *Cornhill Magazine* of 1860—was not conceived before the beginning of the nineteenth century.' Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, 1930), ch. x, p. 271.

'NEW MOULD'
THE EARLY VICTORIAN VERSE-NOVEL

1. See M. W. MacCallum, 'The Dramatic Monologue in the Victorian Period', Warton Lecture, No XVI, 1924; also Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience; the dramatic monologue in modern literary tradition*, London, 1957.

2. *Browning Love Letters*, I, p. 45.

3. *The Literary Gazette*, 1832, p. 741, review of *Becket, an Historical Tragedy*.

4. *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1831, February, p. 287.

5. *The Athenaeum*, 1839, p. 350. See also Ibid., 1845 p. 1103, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1833, January, p. 60.

6. It is interesting to note that the editor of E. B. B.'s collected letters, F. G. Kenyon, considers *Don Juan* to be 'the only other novel-poem in the language', see the *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. F. G. Kenyon (London, 1897), ii, 241.

7. For these very obscure works, some information is necessary.
   (i) Samuel Mullen's 'The Cottager's Sabbath', occurring in *The Pilgrim of Beauty; the Cottager's Sabbath; and other Poems* (London, 1845), is a poem of four cantos of Spenserian stanzas. It tells the story of a thrifty and virtuous Cotter's prodigal son and his marriage with Kate, an orphan girl of the village.
   (ii) Catherine Grace Godwin's 'A tragedy in rural life' (in *The Poetical Works of the late Catherine Grace Godwin*, ed. A. C. Wigan, London, 1854) tells the story of a widow who has lost all her children except one, a sailor who, after years of absence abroad and strange adven-

tures among American Indians, comes back to live with his mother; unfortunately, he turns out to be a maniac and one day actually kills the mother.

(iii) 'The Poor Law Martyr' in William Dearden's *The Vale of Caldene; or the Past and the Present: A Poem in Six Books* (London, 1844), Bk. VI, is the story of Willie and Annie told after the manner of Crabbe.

(iv) The story of Enoch Wray in Ebenezer Elliott's *The Village Patriarch, Love, and other poems* (London, 1834) is a thin story buttressed up with a vast deal of moralizing through ten books. Elliott claims in the preface to have imitated Crabbe.

(v) John O'Neill's *The Drunkard* (London, 1840) gives a series of sketches of rural life rather than a systematic story.

(vi) The anonymous *The Deserter; a poem founded on fact, in three cantos* (London, 1836) is the story of the only son of a widow who deserts the army to come back to his mother, is arrested and sent overseas; the mother dies.

(vii) 'The Sexton's Daughter' is in John Sterling's *Poems* (London, 1839).

(viii) 'Annesley' occurs in Anna Harriet Drury's *Annesley and other Poems* (London, 1847).

(ix) Sarah Stickney's (Mrs. Ellis) *The Sons of the Soil* was published in London, 1840.

8. This letter is not dated but it was written from Bordeaux where Sterling lived from the autumn of 1836 to the middle of 1837; the poem must have been composed during this period.

9. In *The Dream, and other poems* (London, 1840). Mrs. Norton's verse-tales often were based on her own experiences. The *Athenaeum* reviewer wrote about this poem (1840, p. 510): 'To us there is something in such public appeal and confession more powerful and saddening than even the wrongs and misunderstandings that had provoked them.'

10. In *Poems* (London, 1847). In this story, the wife, disgusted with her faithless husband, sometimes thinks of eloping with a man who loves her but she is saved from this 'perilous hour' by the thought of her baby, 'that holy shield upon her breast.'

11. In Mrs. Boddington, *Poems* (London, 1839): see also her verse-tales in the same volume, 'To a young lady', 'Woman's Love', 'Marina'.

12. 'Rosabell' was orginally published in the *Monthly Repository*, February and March 1838, while Leigh Hunt was the editor of the journal. My quotations are from this text. The poem was afterwards published in Scott's *Poems* of 1854 under the title 'Maryanne' with several changes in the text. The final version occurs in Scott's *Autobiographical Notes*, vol. i. Personally, I prefer the earliest version to the over-polished final text.

Scott says in *Autobiographical Notes*, i, pp. 101-102, that he was inspired to write the poem after actually meeting a young street-walker called Rosabell Bonally. The title was changed on the suggestion of Dante Rossetti; Ibid. i, pp. 289, 322.

13. The *Monthly Repository* text gives the following ages : 8, 15, 16, 17 (twice) 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27. The 1854-text gives 8, 16-21, 23-25.

14. The chief evidence of Rossetti's admiration for the poem is in the fact that his picture 'Found' was based on it; see Scott's *Autobiographical Notes*, i, pp. 289, 324; also the following extract from a letter of Rossetti:

> A few years ago I met for the first time (in a publication called the *Story-Teller*) with your two poems, 'Rosabell' and 'A Dream of Love'. So beautiful, so original did they appear to me, that I assure you I could think of little else for several days......
>
> (Dated 25 Nov. 1847; Scott's *Autobiographical Notes*, i, p. 243)

15. The poem occurs in W. C. Bennett's *Poems* (London, 1850): it has a sub-title, 'A Tale of To-Day'. I find that the poem was originally published in Douglas Jerrold's *Shilling Magazine*, January 1848.

16. Cf. Patmore's letter to Sutton; Basil Champneys, *Memoirs & Correspondence of Coventry Patmore* (London, 1900), vol. ii. p. 153.

17. Champneys's reference (op. cit. i, p. 53n.) to 'The Yew-Berry' as 'one of the early poems reprinted' is misleading; it is not a case of simple reprinting, the second version is almost a new poem.

18. Capel Lofft's *Ernest; Or Political Regeneration* was first printed but not published in 1839. (Consequently, the 1839 print has now become a rare copy. I have used the Bodleian copy which lacks the date and the place of publication.) As was the custom in those days, an advance copy of the printed book was sent to several journals. Thus the *Quarterly Review* (Dec. 1839, pp. 153-193) wrote a lengthy review in which the power of the poem was recognized; it was hailed as 'the Chartist epic' but, on the whole, it was considered to be politically a dangerous and subversive work which, for being 'so extravagant in its political views, and so abhorrent from that attachment to public order, to gradual improvement, to Christian virtue and piety' deserved severe condemnation. The reviewer was Dean Milman and, apparently, his condemnation succeeded in intimidating the poet and he withdrew the book (which was anonymous) from circulation. It was published long afterwards in 1868 when the rumblings of the Chartist agitation that had seemed so threatening in 1839 had died down and Capel Lofft had settled down to his sedate but not very lucrative practice in the Middle Temple.

19. The two most notable contemporary reviews that I have come across are the one in the *Quarterly Review* (Dec. 1839) already mentioned and another in the *Monthly Magazine* (July 1839, pp. 1-38).

20. Julia Day's *Poems*, second series (1847).

21. The 3rd. number of the *Germ*, March 1850; the review is of the first canto only.

22. *The Germ*, January 1850.

23. Cf. *Emerson-Clough Letters*, ed. Howard F. Lowry and Ralph Leslie Rusk (Cleveland, 1934,) letter No. 31.

24. For Clough's admiration for Chaucer, see *Poems & Prose Remains*, vol. i. pp. 338-39; also Ibid., p. 220, letter to Child; for his admiration for Crabbe, see Ibid., p. 228, letter to Child.

For Mrs. Browning's admiration for Chaucer, see 'The Book of the Poets' and also *Letters of E. B. B. to R. H. Horne*, ed. S. R. Townshend Mayer (2 vols., London, 1877), vol. i. ch. ii. Her modernization of the story of 'Queen Anelida and False Arcite' is no doubt the best testimony to her admiration. For her admiration for Crabbe, see *Letters of E. B. B.* ed. F. G. Kenyon, i. p. 204.

25. See *Letters of E. B. B.*, ed. F. G. Kenyon, i., p. 234.

26. Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (London, 1932), second series, p. 204.

27. Cf. *Browning Love Letters*, i. p. 7.

28. See *Letters of E. B. B.*, i. 363; i, 389, and particularly ii., 228: 'I have put much of myself in it—I mean to say, of my soul, my thoughts, emotions, opinions.'

29. See particularly Reade's *Our Youth and how it passed. A Lyrical Harmony* (vol. ii. of *The Poetical Works of John Edmund Reade*, new edition, four vols., London, 1857).

30. See Charles Swain, *Letters of Laura D'Auverne* (London, 1853).

31. Virginia Woolf, op. cit. p. 211.

'FERMENTING YEAST' —THE VERSE OF THE EARLY VICTORIAN SOCIAL SITUATION

1. J. H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain: the Early Railway Age*, 1820-1850 (Cambridge, 1926), p. 474.

2. Ibid, p, 481.

3. *The Monthly Magazine*, 1834, pp. 169-76, 'Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century'.

4. Carlyle, *Chartism* (London, 1840), p. 2.

5. Ibid. p. 42.

6. Norman Sykes, *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Age of Reaction and Reconstruction*, ed, F. J. C. Hearnshaw (London, 1932), p. 18.

7. Quoted by A. V. Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England* (London, 1885), p. 119.

8. Speech of the Hon. Sidney Herbert at the Salisbury Diocesan Church Meeting, Nov. 17, 1842; quoted by Mrs. Norton, *The Child of the Islands* (1845), after the title-page.

9. See the autobiographical first chapter in *Life, Poetry and Letters of Ebenezer Elliott*, by his son-in-law, John Watkins (London, 1850), p. 25.

10. *Quarterly Review*, March 1832, p. 92.

11. See *The Life, Character and Genius of Ebenezer Elliott*, by January Searle (pseudonym of George Searle Phillips) (London, 1850), pp. 131-132. and 178-84.

12. Ibid. p. 132.

13. *The Reproof of Brutus* was published in 1830 without the author's name; the Bodleian catalogue as well as the *D. N. B.* attributes it to John Minter Morgan (1782-1854) who had previously, in 1826, published a prose work (also anonymously), *The Revolt of the Bees.* The *D. N. B.* fails to mention *The Poetical Works of John Morgan* (London, 1844).

14. *The Monthly Magazine*, July 1839, 'The Chartist Epic', pp. 1-38. *Quarterly Review*, Dec. 1839, pp. 153-193.

15. The following points are made out by a reviewer in the *Athenaeum*, 1844, p. 335: the poet is said to have attempted to reach out of the same dead level of facility-ridden modern verse; poetry with him is an art; the love-lyrics are voluptuous; the poet has a tendency to startle by offensive daring, extravagance, frantic emotion, perpetual search for excitement.

16. Browning's reference to Eliot Warburton's reading occurs in a letter to Edmund Gosse; see *Letters of Robert Browning*, ed. T. L. Hood p. 184.

17. See Appendix II on 'The Uneducated Poets'.

18. *The Life of Thomas Cooper*. Written by Himself (London, 1872): the hymns from Bramwich and Jones are quoted on pp. 166 and 167.

19. The admiration that the revolutionary poets cherished for Milton and Shelley is remarkable. Mr. Kenneth Muir in 'Shelley's Heirs', *The Penguin New Writing*, no. 26, (1945)—the only considerable essay on this subject except a thin essay of S. T. Williams on 'The Victorian poetry of social unrest' (*Studies in Victorian Literature*, New York, 1923)—lays stress on the influence of Shelley alone. In fact, Milton whose spirit Wordsworth invoked in his sonnet, exercised at least as much vital influence on these revolutionary poets as Shelley. Ebenezer Elliott, J. M. Morgan, Thomas Cooper, the two Joneses (Ebenezer and Ernest,) Gerald Massey, Capel Lofft, R. H. Horne, and a number of other yet lesser poets mention Milton and Shelley in the same breath. Apart from this evidence of lip-service, the poetical works of these minor writers provide internal evidence of Milton's creative influence; the most notable instance is Capel Lofft's *Ernest* which is Milton put to modern use. See Appendix III.

20. *The Purgatory of Suicides*, I, cxxxiv-v.

21. A. H. Miles in *The Poets and Poetry of the Century*, Kingsley to Thomson, p. 322.

22. W. F. Monypenny, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, in six vols., (London, 1910), vol. i, p. 243.

23. (A) On the abolition of the slave trade:—
Charles Mackay, *The Hope of the World* (1845), canto ii.
Nahum Whistlecraft, *The Reform Ministry &c.* (1834), canto i.
Henry Ellison, *Madmoments* (1839, 2 vols.), 'To Clarkson &c.'.
M. J. Chapman, *Barbadoes* (1833).
John Burridge, *The Slave Trade* (1848).

(B) On convicts:—
T. K. Hervey, 'The Convict Ship' in the *Literary Souvenir*, 1825:
Mrs. Boddington, 'The Convict Mother', *Poems* (1839).

(C) On the fallen woman:—
William Kennedy, 'The Fallen Woman' in *The Arrow and the Rose* (1830).
B. Simmons, 'Sketch in the Old Bailey' in *Legends, Lyrics and other Poems* (1843).
T. Westwood, 'Love her still' in *The Burden of the Bell and other lyrics* (1850).
A. H. Clough, lines on prostitutes in *Bothie*, iv.
Charles Mackay, 'May Mary, A Street Romance' in *Egeria* (1850); also 'Waterloo Bridge' in *Selected Poems and Songs of Charles*

Mackay, p. 100. Mackay claims that his poem preceded Hood's 'Bridge of Sighs'.
Mrs. Boddington, 'Mary Graemes' in *Poems* (1839).
William Bell Scott, 'Rosabell' in *Poems* (1854).
Coventry Patmore, 'The Woodman's Daughter' in *Poems* (1844).
W. C. Bennet, 'Sketches from a painter's studio' in *Poems* (1850).

(D) On emigrants:—
Charles Mackay, 'The Emigrants' Farewell', and 'The Scottish Emigrant's Farewell to Yarrow' in *The Hope of the World* (1840); also 'An Emigrant's Farewell' in *Voices from the Crowd* (1846). Ebenezer Elliott, 'The Emigrant's Farewell' in *Corn Law Rhymes* (1833); James White, *The Village Poor-House*, (1832) (Part III, the song of the pauper emigrant, Bill Hervey); Mrs. Ellis, *The Sons of the Soil* (1840), Bk. xiii.

(E) On Temperance:—
John O'Neill, *The Drunkard, a poem* (1840).
Eliza Cook, 'A Temperance Song', *Poems*, vol. iv (1853), p. 104.
Anon; *Temperance Rhymes* (1839).
Anon; *Amy of the Peak &c.* (1846, according to the Bodleian catalogue).

(F) On colonial life—
M. J. Chapman, *Barbadoes* (1846).
Mrs. Ellis, *The Island Queen* (1846).
Anon., *Francis Tamo &c.* (1848).
,, *The Fettered Exile* (1848).
,, *Scenes in the West Indies* (1843): by Adeline.
,, *Polynesia and triumph in the South Seas* (1839).
,, *Pomare, Queen of Tahiti* (1847).

24. Among other works advocating shorter hours of work and holidays, are 'A Song for the Workers' in Eliza Cook's *Poems*, vol. iv; 'Hours of Labour' in E. H. Burrington's *Revelations of the Beautiful* (1848) and the anonymous *Sunday, a Poem &c.* (Calais, 1837).

25. *Quarterly Review* June 1845, p. 2. The phrase 'the shadow that lies &c,' in the next sentence of my text occurs in the preface to *The Child of the Islands* (1845).

26. *The Athenaeum*, 1846, p. 116. On the gold-lust of the day, Eliza Cook has a poem, 'Song of the Spirit of Gold' in *Poems*, second series (1845). Henry Ellison writes on the theme in *Madmoments*. Ellison, a clergyman, expresses in this work his" soulabhorrence of Rankworship and Wealthidolatry' (*sic.* preface, p. 4.). His pietistic attitude is precisely the sort of thing that provoked the Radicals to downright abuse of the Church; he writes:

Talk not of Rich and poor; for in the Eye
Of God, *all all* are equal: there is none
So poor, but can find words to call upon
Him.

(*Madmoments*, i, p. 36)

27. Introduction to *Selected Poems and Songs of Charles Mackay*, xii-xiii.

28. *Early Victorian England*, ed. G. M. Young (London, 1934) vol. i, p. 413.

29. These details of Tennyson's early life and the quoted words occur in *Tennyson, A Memoir*, vol, i., ch, ii.

30. Ibid. vol, i, p. 20.

31. See Ibid. i, p. 162. Tennyson read a description of a hungry lion in Pringle's *Travels;* his image grew out of that description.

Thomas Pringle (1789-1834), a Scotsman, did some journalism, took part in progressive movements and had contacts with Zachary Macaulay, Clarkson, and Wilberforce; lived in South Africa for some time; was a contributor to Annuals, and earned the good opinion of Coleridge who, reading 'Afar in the Desert', wrote thus to Pringle: 'For some days I did little else but read and recite your poem. . . I do not hesitate to declare it among the two or three most perfect lyrics in our language'. (*Pringle's Poetical Works*, Memoir by Leitch Ritchie, p. cxlii, 1839). Some of his poems deal with social problems.

32. See *Robert Browning and Alfred Domett*, ed. F. G. Kenyon, pp. 42, 111, 114.

33. The phrase is from *Sordello*, V, 103.

34. *Aurora Leigh*, VIII, 396; the next quotation in my text is from Ibid. VIII, 86-88.

35. Ibid. VIII, 635; the quotation in my next sentence is from Ibid. VIII, 617-19.

36. Ibid. VIII, 687.

37. Ibid. IX 924-28; 932-33; 935-36; 938-39.

38. *Poems and Prose Remains of A. H. Clough*, (ed. by his wife. 2 vols,. London, 1869) i., p. 92, letter to J. P. Gell.

39. *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. G.W. E. Russell, (London, 1895) vol. i, pp. 4, 5, 8.

40. Bamford, one of the leaders at Peterloo, opposed industrial workers in 1826 and was against the Chartists afterwards; see his *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (1840-44). Bamford used to write verses; his 'beautiful little poem'—'God help the poor'—is quoted by Job Leigh and admired by John Barton in Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. Mrs. Gaskell wrote to Tennyson on behalf of Bamford; Bamford wrote to Tennyson on receipt of a copy of *Poems;* see *Tennyson, A Memoir*, i, 283-86.

Thomas Cooper ceased to take any active part in the Chartist Movement after his release from prison and indeed disapproved of later Chartism.

41. Jeffrey reviewed Crabbe's *The Borough* in the *Edinburgh Review;* I have quoted from the reprint of the essay in *Jeffrey's Essays from the Edinburgh Review*, published by Routledge (London), p. 307.

42. *Qtly. Rev.*, Sept. 1842, p. 390.

43. Ibid. June 1845, p. 1.

44. *Athenaeum*, 1843, p. 732.

45. *The Monthly Repository*, Aug. 1832, p. 537.

46. The *Quarterly* review of the *Corn Law Rhymes* is in the March 1832 number, p. 92. The saying about God's Bible occurs in *Tennyson, A Memoir*, i, p. 94.

47. *Qtly, Rev.*, Dec., 1839, p. 155.

48. The quotation is from the *Athenaeum*, 1844, pp. 318-19.

49. Elizabeth Barrett's statement is in the *Browning Love Letters*, i, p. 45.

50. Kenneth Muir, 'Shelley's Heirs' in the *Penguin New Writings*, no. 25, 1945, ed. John Lehmann.

'LAYS OF SORROW BORN' —TENNYSON'S *IN MEMORIAM*

1. It was Tennyson's practice to have early printed drafts or 'trial-editions'; e.g. the two trial-editions of *The Lover's Tale*, 1833 and 1868; that of *Morte d'Arthur*, 1842.

The variations between the trial-edition of *In Memoriam* and the final have been given by R. Herne Shepherd in his *The Bibliography of Tennyson*, London, 1896.

T. J. Wise, *Catalogue of the Ashley Library*, vol. X, speaks of the trial-edition as dating March 1850; Hallam Tennyson, *Memoir*, i, p. 297, states that the month was May. My conjecture is that the early draft was sent to press in March and withdrawn in May. A copy of this trial-edition is now rare. Although W. M. Rossetti, in *P.R.B. Journal* of 21 March 1850, mentions a 'half-dozen copies', I would accept as the more authoritative the poet's statement in his undated letter (but dating, according to the son-biographer, October, 1849) to Aubrey de Vere :

> With respect to the 'Elegies'...I believe I am going to print them, and then I need not tell you that you will be perfectly welcome to

> a copy, on the condition that when the book is published, this avant-courier of it shall be either sent back to me, or die the death by fire in Curragh Chase. I shall print about twenty-five copies, and let them out among friends under the same condition of either return or cremation.
>
> (*Memoir*, i, pp. 282-83).

2. For a note on the 1850 reviews of *In Memoriam*, see Appendix IV.

3. For a note on the earliest of these elegies, see Appendix V.

4. *Memoir*, i, p. 166.

5. The phrase occurs in 'An Idle Rhyme', *Unpublished Early Poems*, p. 79.

6. These lines have been printed in *Memoir*, i, p. 248.

7. *Memoir*, i, p. 304.

8. Of the numerous statements recording this expectation, perhaps the most sober occurs in the *Athenaeum*, 1835, p. 774: 'We should indeed call him a benefactor who would point out to the people the light which shines amidst the chaos of ordinary life; who would disentangle the spiritual from the sensual even out of the unpromising materials which this trading and unquiet age furnishes.'

For other important expressions of this expectation, see *Qtly. Rev.*, Sept. 1842, p. 390; the *Athenaeum*, 1847, p. 774.

9. *Browning Love Letters* (London, 1899) i, p. 38.

10. Basil Champneys, *Coventry Patmore*, (London, 1900) i, p. 107.

11. W. Bell Scott, *Autobiographical Notes*, ed. W. Minto (London, 1892) i, p. 235.

12. *Fraser's Magazine*, Sept. 1850, p. 245; F.W. Robertson, *Two Lectures on the Influence of Poetry on the Working Classes*, Brighton and London, 1852, pp. 26-40.

13. Milnes, 'The Marvel of life', *Poems of Many Years* (London, 1838, priv. ptd); Charles Whitehead, *The Solitary* (London, 1831), I, xxviii; *Poems* by Charlotte and Branwell Bronte (Oxford, 1934), pp. 372-73.

14. *Memoir*, i, p. 304.

15. See *Memoir*, i, pp. 300-304.

16. A. C. Bradley, *A Commentary on Tennyson's In Memoriam*, (London,

1902), has discussed the problem of the chronology of the elegies and since his day no fresh materials have been discovered to enable us to re-open the question.

I find that in *A chronological list of the Works of Tennyson* (p. 8) published by the Grolier Club, it has been stated, on what evidence I do not know, that *In Memoriam* appears to have been written between September 1833 and 1836, the Epithalamium being written in 1882 and the introductory lines in 1849. The Grolier Club's dating of the elegies confirms my argument that 'Tennyson, while stringing the sections together, gave a neat and not entirely inexact or unveracious outline in the three-year division.'

17. For a note on these lines, see Appendix V.

18. *Memoir*, i, p 123.

19. The exact date of the composition of 'The Two Voices' has not been, and perhaps cannot be, ascertained. Hallam Tennyson gives no date; Churton Collins in *The Poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (London 1901, p. 120) adds nothing to the information supplied by Hallam Tennyson; nor does the latest biographer, Sir Charles Tennyson (*Alfred Tennyson*, London, 1950), throw any new light on the matter. In the *Memoir* (i, p. 139), there is a letter from Spedding to Tennyson which refers to 'The Thoughts of a Suicide' (according to Hallam Tennyson's footnote this was 'The Two Voices'); the letter is dated 19 September 1834. T. J. Wise in *A Bibliography of the Writings of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, (printed for private circulation, London, 1908) states that an Ms. dated 1833 with only 23 stanzas, exists (it must be now in the Ashley Library); he further states that another Ms. dated 1834 also exists; it has 93 stanzas while the present poem has 154 and 4 stanzas of this Ms. were suppressed in the final version. It would be interesting to compare the versions of 1833 and 1843 with the final text.

20. See *Memoir*, i, pp. 313 and 314; see also *William Allingham, A Diary* (ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford, London, 1907) pp. 148-49. A few examples out of many, of the poetic fruits of Tennyson's bitter moods are *Maud*, some poems of the *Tiresias* volume, and *The Promise of May*.

21. 'Tennyson' in *Revaluations. Studies in Biography* (London, 1931), p. 69.

22. Cf. 'Why should we weep for those who die ?', *Poems by Two Brothers*, 2nd. ed. 1893. The idea of death occurs also in the 1830 volume in 'The Burial of Love', 'All things will die,' 'The Dying Swan', 'A Dirge', 'Love and Death, the songs 'I' the glooming light' and 'A spirit haunts'. Cf. also 'The Death of the Old Year' and 'To J. S. 'in the 1833 volume and 'Perdidi Diem' in *Unpublished Early Poems*.

23. 'Why should we weep for those who die?', *Poems by Two Brothers*, p. 16.

24. This poem has been interpreted by Harold Nicolson as a personal

utterance (*Tennyson*, 2nd. edition reprinted 1949, London, pp. 96-98). I do not think we are justified in reading Tennyson's own thoughts into the poem. It was published in 1830. Charles Tennyson's *Sonnets and Fugitive Pieces*, published in the same year, contains a sonnet—no. xliv—which earned the approval of Coleridge and which has the title 'Supposed to be written by any feeble-minded man, meditating self-destruction'. There is little resemblance in the treatment of the idea between Charles's sonnet and Alfred's longer poem, but the similarities of title and basic idea are very striking. Quite possibly, the two brothers set themselves a poetical exercise of writing on the ruminations of a supposed person of whom they did not morally approve.

25. Cf. Frederick Tennyson, sonnet in *Friendship's Offering*, 1832; Trench, 'To my godchild', *The Story of Justin Martyr* (London 1835); Williams, sonnets in *Thoughts in Past Years* (London, 1838), pp. 36, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51; Mrs. Boddington, 'The Love of Nature', *Poems*, (London, 1839); Charles Mackay, *Egeria* (London 1850); Capel Lofft (*Ernest*, the unpublished printed copy of 1839), pp. 215, 546-57.

26. Contrast the two sonnets, 'One lesson, Nature etc.' and 'To an Independent Preacher'. The contradiction between these two sonnets was noticed by the reviewer in *The Germ*, no. 2, p. 95.

27. Mr. J. N. Bryson of Balliol suggested to me that 'overlook' here may mean 'look over', 'survey'. Browning's use of words is sufficiently individual to warrant this meaning too. The total meaning of the passage however is not affected by the alternative meanings of this paticular word.

28. For this evidence, see Appendix VI.

29. For these biographical details, see *Memoir*, i, pp. 124 and 162.

30. Lionel Stevenson, *Darwin Among the Poets*, Chicago, 1932. There are also some valuable paragraphs in Ernest de Selincourt's 'The Interplay of Literature and Science during the last three centuries', *Wordsworthian and Other Studies*, Oxford, 1947.

31. For example, 'The Two Voices', 'Love thou thy land', the stanzas in 'The Palace of Art' excised in the 1842 version, Lady Psyche's lecture in *The Princess*. Of these the first three were written before the evolutionary sections of *In Memoriam*.

Hallam Tennyson states in *Memoir*, i, p. 223n, that the sections of *In Memoriam* dealing with evolution had been read by the poet's friends some years before the publication of *Vestiges of Creation* in 1844. This statement, claiming for the poet something of the scientific originality of Goethe, seems to suggest that Tennyson reached the idea of evolution independently. We are reminded of a similar claim made by Browning for himself in a letter to Furnivall in 1881, (cf. *Letters of Browning*, ed. T. L. Hood, pp. 199-200). Actually, Tennyson had already read Lyell (*Principles of Geology*, 1830) in 1837 before the publi-

cation of Chambers's book; besides, the idea of evolution was already familiar to intellectual Europe in the first quarter of the 19th century. As far as Tennyson is concerned, the real point is not to claim for him scientific originality but to recognize that while hundreds of people had read Lyell and Chambers, he was among the very few men of letters (the American Emerson being another notable writer) to realize the effects of the theory on human thought.

32. *Memoir*, i, p. 278.

33. Ibid. p. 20.

34. Cf. *Sordello*, VI, 466-485:

The sudden swell
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
Eternity, as Time—as Matter—Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a life.
.. ..
.. Once this understood,
As suddenly he felt himself alone,
Quite out of Time and this world.

35. *Ashley Library Catalogue*, vol, x, p. 109, letter to Edmund Gosse. I have italicised two words in this extract which, according to Carl J. Weber (*Hardy of Wessex*, New York, 1940, p. 269, Appendix 10) have been incorrectly given by Wise. Weber says the correct readings are 'literary' and 'nation'. Wise gives the date as 3 March 1899, Weber makes it 6 March.

36. See F. T. Russell, *One Word More on Browning*, (Palo Alto, 1929) ch. v.

37. J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, London, 1920, Preface, ix.

38. The earnestness of the Early Victorian age is evident even in their constant use of the word 'earnest'. A few examples from the periodical literary criticism of the age may be given.

(a) *The Athenaeum*, 1832, p. 770, refers to Tennyson's 'apparent earnestness'.

(b) Ibid. 1834, p. 485, 'want of earnestness...characterizes nearly all our authors.'

(c) Ibid. 1838, p. 466: Miss Barrett's 'language is wanting in the simplicity of unaffected earnestness.'

(d) Ibid. 1850, p. 225: "To use phrases which in spite of cant and usage still retain their significance, it was plain that the poet Bailey was 'in earnest', no 'sham'."

(e) *The Monthly Repository*, Jan. 1833, p. 40: 'Mr. Tennyson must have more earnestness.'

(f) George Gilfillan, *A Second Gallery of Literary Portraits*, Edinburgh, 1850, p. 334: 'there is especially a little cluster of earnest poets whom we are at all times delighted to honour...Longfellow, Emerson, Bailey, Tennyson, and the Brownings.'

39. *The Athenaeum*, 1850, p. 630.

APPENDIX I

THE DATE OF THE HOLOGRAPH IN THE MILL-COPY *PAULINE*.

(*Vide* text *Supra* p. 5 reference 6)

The *Pauline* copy bearing Browning's holograph has had a chequered history. Originally one of the dozen copies sent by the poet to W. J. Fox, it went from Fox to Mill. When the publication of his intended review was abandoned, Mill returned the copy to Fox, with his pencilled notes in it. Fox sent the copy back to Browning; the poet wrote his remarks in reply to Mill; afterwards, he made a gift of the copy to Forster; after the death of Forster, the copy was believed to have entered the Forster collection. When on 29 August 1881, Browning wrote to F. J. Furnivall (who was preparing a bibliography of the poet's works) that the Mill-notes were at the end of this particular copy, Furnivall must have looked up the matter in the catalogue of the Forster library, only to find no mention of the copy. On 15 September 1881, Browning wrote to Furnivall (*Letters*, p. 196) :

> What you tell me about the copy of 'Pauline' interests me much: if 'the entry was struck out of the catalogue', I suppose that means—the request I made to the Executor, Mr. Chitty, that the book might be returned to me,—which he promised to attend to, but of which I heard no more, was really complied with *so far*—I shall try if I can recover the copy.

Browning's hope to recover the missing copy (see also *Letters*, p. 253) was not fulfilled during his lifetime. After Chitty's death in 1899, the copy which had been in his possession all the time was returned by his son to the Forster and Dyce Collection where it now is.

For us, the interesting question is, when was the holograph written ? Kenyon (Centenary edition, I, ix) says it was written 'five years later' than 1832. Phelps, in the *MLN* article (p. 298), wishes he knew 'exactly when Browning wrote his notes in this volume' and quotes Kenyon's date which is also accepted by DeVane (*Handbook*, p. 39) with the qualification 'probably'. Hall Griffin gives no date (*Life*, p. 60).

Kenyon gives no reason for his date. I suggest an earlier date than 1837. Browning and Forster met for the first time at Macready's house in 1835 (Griffin, *Life*, p. 75); relations between them quickly ripened to friendship: on 16 Feb. 1836, Forster and Macready spoke to Browning about a proposed play on Narses; in March 1836, Forster wrote a commendatory review of *Paracelsus* in the *New Monthly Magazine*; on 26 May they sat together in a box to witness the first-night show of Talfourd's *Ion*, and the same night joined the supper at 56 Russell Square. Considering these evidences of intimacy between the two, it seems likely that the gift was made not later than 1836.

At whichever date the gift might have been made, the holograph, I think, was written in 1833. On his receipt of the Mill-copy in 1833, he must have been provoked by Mill's notes to write out his replies. On 'Richmond, October 22 ,1832', Mill's comment was, 'This transition from speaking to Pauline to writing a letter to the public with *place* and *date*, is quite terrible'. Browning's counter comment was, 'Kean was acting there: I saw him in Richard III that night, and conceived THE CHILDISH SCHEME ALREADY MENTIONED.' (Bold-type mine). The only document where this scheme has been stated is the holograph. There is nothing in the prefatorial Latin extract or elsewhere to show what Browning's scheme was; the holograph stands alone. The holograph, I suggest, was written on the copy as soon as the poet had got it back, i.e. in 1833.

APPENDIX II

THE 'UNEDUCATED POETS'

(*Vide* text *Supra* p. 161, reference 17)

That the rise of the 'uneducated poets' in the Early Victorian period became quite a phenomenon is proved as much by the prolific production of such writers as by the attention that the journals gave to it. I have noticed the following contemporary articles on the subject:

Quarterly Review, vol xliv, pp. 52-82, vol. xlvii.
Edinburgh Review, Sept, 1831, pp. 69-84.
The Athenaeum, 1830, p. 679; 1831, pp. 130-32;
1834, p. 622; 1842, pp. 334-36; 1842, pp. 542-43; 1842, p. 683.
The Literary Gazette, 1831, pp. 81-82.
The Monthly Magazine, July 1841, pp. 73-84.
The New Monthly Magazine, July 1841, pp. 73-84.

The term 'uneducated poets' received currency from Robert Southey. He wrote an 'Introductory Essay on the lives and works of our uneducated poets' for a volume called *Attempts in Verse* written by John Jones, a domestic servant, and published in 1831 by John Murray. The chief points of Southey's essay are :

> The distinction between educated and uneducated poets did not obtain in early times; 'the language of a Saxon thane was not more cultivated than that of the churl on his estate'; such a distinction came in vogue during the reign of Elizabeth when the mother tongue of the lower classes ceased to be the language of composition; that of the peasantry was antiquated, that of inferior citizens became vulgar; in recent times, people from the uneducated classes have been drawn to poetical composition, sometimes achieving credit thereby.

Southey's essay is as interesting as the literary phenomenon. The point of the term "uneducated" is that these poets belong to the lower classes of society; that they are, what today we should call, working-class men and women; that because of their poverty and social lowliness they could not be and were not educated in schools, far less educated in Oxford or Cambridge. Southey's distinction between the language of the thane and that of the churl suggests that the working-class poet of the nineteenth century might reasonably be expected to use the diction distinctive to his class. As far as I can see, not one of these 'uneducated' poets uses a diction that is even remotely different from that of the upper class poets. In diction as well as in content, these poets of humble origin aim at imitating the upper class writer.

Below is a list of verses by working-class writers—such verses as I have either read or found being referred to—of the Early Victorian period. I am acquainted only with works numbering 1 to 18.

1. John Jones, *Attempts in Verse*, London, 1831, with an introductory essay by Robert Southey. Jones wrote amiable verses to the ladies and gentlemen of the houses he served. There is no social consciousness in him.

2. Eliza Cook; enjoyed considerable popularity; conducted *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849-54); was given a civil list pension of £100 in 1863. One of the best of the poets who rose from the working-classes. In the preface to *Poems*, second series, she retorts on reviewers who call her 'a poet of and for the lower classes.' She has numerous poems on the joys and sorrows of the working classes, but appears to hold no political doctrines.

3. Robert Millhouse: called 'the Artisan Poet of Nottingham', 'the Burns of Sherwood Forest'. Started work at six. There is nothing in his writings to show that the economic and social conditions of his class aroused any poetical feelings in him. Wrote *The Destinies of Man*, London, 1832.

4. Charles Crocker. A Chichester man, was an apprentice to a shoemaker until he set up as one himself. Crocker was favourably reviewed in *Athenaeum* (1830, p. 679; 1842, p. 335) and the *New Monthly Magazine* (Nov., 1830, p. 456.). He has some facility in versification but gives no evidence of social consciousness. Wrote the *Vale of Obscurity, the Lavant, and other poems*, Chichester, 1830, and *Kingley Vale, and other poems*, Chichester, 1837.

5. Thomas Ragg's *The Deity*, (London 1834) another of those epical tomes so distinctive of the Early Victorian period, is a storehouse of unreadable commonplace and provoked the following comment in the *Athenaeum*, 1834, p. 622.

> We cannot but wish that some of these poets would . . . let their genius work upon the objects and images more immediately around them . . . Why should we not have songs for the people—of the harvest—of the loom—of the mine—of the forest ?

Ragg shows no social consciousness at all.

6. Robert Nicoll (1814-37) is described in the *D. N. B.* as 'a strong, even a violent, radical politician', but his verses actually show no violence; he has however some praiseworthy lyrics of freedom. His imitations of Keats and Wordsworth are remarkable. Most of his poems are in Scots, and these are superior to the English poems. Wrote *Poems and Lyrics*, Edinburgh, 1835.

7. Thomas Miller, a basket-maker came to be well known to the literary circles of London. He published several novels and was much in demand with the Annuals. Miller shows no social consciousness. Wrote *Poems*, London, 1841.

8. John Bolton Rogerson. His *A Voice from the Town, and other poems* was found to be 'a little too much, perhaps, sicklied o'er with the pale hue of sentiment' (*Athenaeum*, 1842, p. 1085). Rogerson gives no evidence of social consciousness, and like Ragg, Miller and Millhouse, tries to emulate the educated poets.

9. Mary Hutton's verses (*Cottage Tales, and Poems*, Sheffield, 1842) are worthless; she sometimes writes prose stories related to the life she knows but there is no criticism of social conditions.

10. John Overs's work, *Evenings of a Working Man*, London, 1844, has the distinction of bearing a prefatory essay by Dickens; it is a miscellany of prose tales and verse, full of colourless but sincere romanticism.

11. William Thom is a truer poet than most of these writers. His autobiography in *Rhymes and Recollections of a Handloom Weaver* (London, 1844) tells a poignant story. Some of his poems ('I've sought in lands ayont the sea', 'My hameless ha', 'The Mitherless Bairn') tell of personal suffering occasioned by social wrongs.

12. Robert Story (*The Lyrical and other minor poems*, London, 1861) was conscious of the socio-political changes of his time; he changed sides from the Radicals to the Conservatives.

13. Owen Howell, *Westminster Abbey, and Life*, London, 1843, a draper's shopman, had considerable facility in writing verse, and was well reviewed in the *Athenaeum*, 1842, pp. 1334-36.

14. Mary Colling's *Fables, and other pieces in verse*, London, 1831, merited notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug. 1831, p. 159.

15. John Bethune (*Poems*) was reviewed in the *Athenaeum*, 1842, pp. 838-41.

16. Joseph Kirkham's *Poetical Flights of a Factory Youth*, was reviewed in the *Athenaeum*, 1842, p. 334-36. No social consciousness.

17. F. P. Gibbins. *Attempts at Verse*, reviewed in the *Athenaeum*, 1842, pp. 334-36. No social consciousness.

18. Anonymous. *Verses by a Poor Man*, second edn., 1842; dedicated to the Prince Consort. No social consciousness.

19. John Alford P. L. T. ('I have likewise received the title of Poet Laureate to the town of Trowbridge') referred to Crabbe as a brother-poet, sent verses to the King, the Duke of Wellington, and Sir Robert Peel. He is noticed in the *Quarterly Rev.*, vol. xlvii, no. xciii, pp. 80–103.

20. James Fulcher Brown, *Gasparoni and other poems*. (I am not in possession of any other details about this writer.)

21. C. Cole, *Political and other poems*; reviewed in *Literary Gazette*, 1843, p. 134.

22. A. Smart, *Rambling Rhymes*, reviewed in *Athenaeum*, 1845, p. 1197.

23. James Barnfield, a weaver in Gloucestershire, reviewed in the *Qtly, Rev.*, vol, xlvii, no. xciii, pp. 80–103.

24. Ossian Macpherson, *A Bard's Reverie*, reviewed in *Athenaeum*, 1846, pp. 198-99.

25. William Jones, *The Spirit, or a Dream in the Woodlands*, reviewed in *Athenaeum*, 1849, p. 908.

26. Robert Macburnie, *The Peasant's Day*, reviewed in the *New Monthly Magazine*, 1833, vol, 39, p. 103.

27. Richard Manley, *Miscellaneous Pieces in verse, Moral and Religious*, reviewed in *Athenaeum*, 1831, p. 120.

28. *The Mechanic's Saturday Night* by a Mechanic; reviewed in *Literary Gazette*, 1830, p. 736.

29. *The Triumph of Time*, by the Blind Bard of Cicestria, reviewed in *Athenaeum*, 1842, p. 683.

30. *Odes, Elegies*, by B. F. S., reviewed in *Literary Gazette*, 1833, p. 98.

31. *Poems, Moral and Miscellaneous*, by a Journeyman Mechanic, reviewed in *Athenaeum*, 1842, p. 950.

32. J. C. Prince, *Hours with the Muses*, inspired the *Athenaeum* reviewer (18 June 1842, pp. 542-43) to write again on the theme of 'Uneducated Poets'.

APPENDIX III

ADMIRATION FOR MILTON AND SHELLEY

(*Vide* text *Supra* p. 163, reference 19)

For the Victorian poet, Milton and Shelley were among the most powerful sources of poetic inspiration. In particular, the poet concerned with the contemporary social situation would look upon Milton and Shelley as the great champions of liberty; the political poems of Wordsworth exercised little influence on him. R. D. Havens (*The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*, London, 1922, pp. 40-43) points out that one of the reasons for the immense popularity of Milton in the eighteenth century was the prominence given to the conception of Satan as the revolutionary of unconquerable will and courage never to yield or submit. Reading through the Early Victorian poetry of social unrest, I find this admiration of Milton continued. Thus, Ebenezer Elliott says that Milton held him captive long; see *Life, Poetry, and Letters of Ebenezer Elliott*, By His Son-in-Law, John Watkins, London, 1850, p. 23; see also Ebenezer Elliott, *More Verse and Prose*, two vols., London, 1850, ii.p. 160. He calls Milton 'the poet of our Republic'. Thomas Cooper addresses Milton thus :

> I joy that my young heart a covenant made
> To take thee for its guide in patriot deed,—
> If Life's eventful roll should shew arrayed
> The brethren of my fatherland agreed
> To claim their ancient birthright and be freed.

(*The Purgatory of Suicides*,II, viii-ix)

Capel Lofft, the poet of Chartism, dedicates his *Ernest* 'To the memory of Milton, the Poet, the Divine, the Republican.' There is indeed a Miltonic note in *Ernest*, especially in the speeches of the fiery rebels.

That Milton's influence would be powerful on those who aimed at writing epic poems, on themes that might be Biblical or non-Biblical, can be easily surmised. The chief followers of the Miltonic tradition during the first quarter of the nineteenth century were Cottle, Milman, Atherstone, Pollock, and Robert Ayres Landor. To this dying tradition, the Early Victorians added no galvanic touch. Among the notable imitations of Milton dealing with Biblical themes were: Anon. *The Last Days of the Antediluvian World. A Forlorn Hope, and Ishmael's Address*, Poems, London, 1830; Anon. *David. A Poem*, London, 1831; Anon. *The Wonders of Chaos and the Creation Exemplified. A Poem in Eight Cantos.* London, 1834: Anon. *The Incarnate One. A Poem in three books*, London, 1838: Anon. *Millennium Eve: A Poem*, Begun at Florence, in Sept. 1841, London, 1843 Anon. *Jugurtha*, London, 1845; John Abraham Heraud, *Judgement of the Flood*, London, 1834: Thomas Hawkins, *The Wars of Jehovah, in Heaven, Earth, and Hell*: in Nine Books, London, 1844. Among the Miltonic imitations on Non-Biblical themes, the only notable work is the Hon. & Rev. William Herbert's *Attila, King of the Huns*, London, 1838: Herbert is mentioned in Byron's *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*.

Admiration for Shelley is evident in J. M. Morgan, Thomas Wade, Ebenezer

Jones, Gerald Massey and Ernest Jones, all poets with pronounced feelings for the social unrest of their times. *Corn Law Rhymes*, a book so different from Elliott's earlier works, was published two years after the *Masque of Anarchy;* the stirring song 'To the Men of England', published in the second edition of the *Masque of Anarchy* in 1842, was eagerly read by the Chartists. Between the years 1830 and 1850, the following poets refer to Shelley :

Anon. Sonnet in the *Athenaeum*, 1829, p. 186, 'On the Protestant Burial Ground at Rome, seen by Moonlight.'

—This was by Arthur Hallam. This poem, along with another sonnet on Keats and two sonnets in Italian—all by Hallam but signed 'Julian' —have been admitted in T. H. Vail Motter's *Writings of Arthur Hallam* (New York and London, 1943) with some textual variations. Motter however has not noted that these sonnets were previously published at all. Hallam has another sonnet, 'Then what is Life, I cried' in *Writings.* He refers to Shelley also in a footnote to *Timbuctoo* and in 'Lines in answer to a desponding letter.'

J. M. Morgan, *The Reproof of Brutus* (London, 1830), Part III, p. 76. Morgan refers to the rising fame of Shelley in a footnote on p. 77.

Charles Whitehead, *The Solitary* (London, 1830), III, xxvii-xxxiii.

Literary Souvenir, 1830, pp. 166-170, 'Hymn to Liberty' by W.S. Walker; the poem borrows its motto from Shelley and is generally Shelleyan in tone.

Chandos Leigh, *Epistles to a friend in town, and other poems* (London, 1831).

'I wrote a piece full of a short of dithyrambic laudation on P. B. Shelley, which appeared in *Tait's Monthly Magazine* in 1832, I think'; William Bell Scott, *Autobiographical Notes*, i, p. 91. The poem actually occurs in *Poems*, 1875.

Browning's well-known apostrophe in *Pauline* (1833), also in *Sordello*, (1840) I, 60-63, where Shelley's spirit is asked to keep away from him.

Ebenezer Elliott's *The Village Patriarch* (1834), IV, includes Shelley in a roll of poets.

Robert Montgomery in the 'Biographical Summary' at the end of his *Oxford* (4th ed., London, 1836) has a long note, pp. 160-169, on Shelley. He rejoices that 'the proscribed Shelley has been brought back to the admiration of his country'; he speaks of 'the evanescent magic of Shelley's poetry', and declares that 'Milton himself scarcely surpassed him in the full and faultless harmony of his numbers and the magical richness of his language.'

Anon. *Poems and Fragments*, Jersey, 1835. The first poem is 'On the Death of Percy Bysshe Shelley'. Shelley is made, before his death, to bend his knees in prayer to God.

An unsigned sonnet in *Friendship's Offering*, 1835, p. 294, mentions Shelley as one of the 'Lights of Songs'.

Sterling in a letter dated November, 1835: 'It will be my object to exhibit the gorgeousness and vividness of Shelley's imagery with the wide speculation of Wordsworth.' (*Sterling's Essays and Tales*) Sterling also mentions Shelley in his poem 'The Litanies of Great Men.'

An anonymous poem, *Alpha*, London, 1842, speaks of Shelley on pp. 76 and 82.

B. Simmons, *Legends, Lyrics and other poems*, Edinburgh & London, 1843, has a poem 'Lines written in the first blank leaf of Shelley's Poems.'

Elizabeth Barrett Barrett's reference to Shelley in 'A Vision of Poets', *Poems*, 1844.

Thomas Cooper, *The Purgatory of Suicides* (1845), II, vii.

Several periodicals are enthusiastic about Shelley. The *New Monthly Magazine* (July 1830, p. 285), the *Literary Gazette* (1832, pp. 692-93 and p. 709); and the *Monthly Magazine* (Feb. 1841, p. 209) have articles. The most untired in the service of Shelley was the *Athenaeum*. It serially published the 'Memoir of Shelley' (1832, pp. 472-74, 488-89, 502-504, 522-524, 535-537, 554-555): the authorship, in spite of anonymity, was Medwin's and was clearly indicated as such in the editorial footnote. This periodical noted with approval the rise of Shelley's fame in the following articles: 1828, pp. 193-94; 1829, pp. 544-546 1830, p. 218: pp. 705-707.

Through the good offices of Medwin, the *Athenaeum* published the following writings of Shelley for the first time :

1832, pp. 568-69,	'The Coliseum' (prose fragment)
" p. 586,	'Invocation to Misery' (poem)
" pp. 601-602,	'The Age of Pericles' (Prose)
" pp. 606-618,	'The Minerva' (prose)
" p. 633,	'Arch of Titus' (Prose)
" p. 680,	'With a guitar' (poem)
" p. 698,	'Remarks on Mandeville and Mr Godwin' (prose)
" p. 730,	'On Frankenstein' (prose)
" pp. 761-762,	'On the revival of literature' (prose)
" p. 794,	'Lines written during the Castlereagh administration' (poem)
1833, p. 250,	'A System of Government by Juries' (Prose)

APPENDIX IV

REVIEWS OF *IN MEMORIAM*, 1850

(*Vide* text *Supra* p. 227, reference 2)

It is strange that neither the *Quarterly* nor the *Edinburgh* reviewed *In Memoriam* in 1850. The most notable review was written by Charles Kingsley in the *Fraser's Magazine*. Kingsley found in the poem a deep Christian significance. Another early critic who popularised the Christian significance of the poem was F. W. Robertson (like Kingsley, a Christian Socialist) whose opinions on the subject were published in *Two Lectures on the Influence of Poetry on the Working Classes*, London and Brighton, 1852. A resumé is given below of the principal reviews:

The Literary Gazette 15 June, p. 407 :

Praises *In Memoriam* in a brief notice. About the author it writes, 'If by a female hand, as it purports to be, we welcome to the Muses' banquet, melancholy though the music be, one of their sweetest minstrels.'

The Gentleman's Magazine, July, pp. 59-60 :

In a very brief notice calls it 'the book of books'. Considers only the elegiac character of the poem; does not notice any Christian significance.

The Westminster Review, July, p. 572. :

'Of a surety there is but one known poet, now living, who could have produced this exquisite volume..the poet-breathings of a heart whose sorrow seventeen years' lapse has served only to chasten, not to extinguish.'

Sharpe's London Journal, vol. xii, pp. 119-121 :

Knows the identity of the author. Describes the book as 'a collection of plaintive elegies'; compares with *Adonais;* makes no reference to the Christian import; considers *In Memoriam* superior to all previous works of Tennyson.

Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, August, pp. 499-505 :

A twelve-column review states that before the lapse of twenty-four hours the authorship was known. 'No one endowed with a perception of what poetry is, could have closed the volume without a full conviction that it was the creation of the first poet of the day' (p. 499). Calls the poem 'perfect and unique'; distinguishes *In Memoriam* from *Lycidas* and *Adonais*, refers to 'Love and Death' of the 1830 volume and says that 'the interval has turned the imagination of grief into the stern consciousness of experience' (p. 500). Enquires what the meaning is of 'the crimson-circled star' that falls 'into her father's grave' (p. 505).

Fraser's Magazine, September, pp. 245-55 :

'..This last work of our only living great poet seems to us at once the culmination of all his efforts and the key to many difficulties in his former writings (p. 245)..In our eyes, the noblest Christian poem which England has produced for two centuries (p. 245) Mr. Tennyson's earlier poems, rather than these latter ones coincide with the tastes and speculations of the young men of this day (p. 246)..This deep, simple faith in the divineness of Nature as she appears, which, in our eyes, is Mr. Tennyson's *differentia*, is really the natural accompaniment of..his subjective and transcendental mysticism (p. 247).'

The Athenaeum, pp. 629-30 :

'Taking the bereavement recorded at the commencement for their key-note, they [the sections of the poem] embody all the phases of feeling and speculation which such a loss induces (p. 629)..They come upon us with the diary of a love so profound, that though using the largest symbols of

imagination, they appear to us as direct and true as the homeliest language (p. 629). .With Mr. Tennyson the argument for trust in the future seems often to rest chiefly on the mental disposition to trust (p. 630).'

Reviews appeared also in the *Examiner* (written by John Forster), the *Atlas*, and the *Dublin University Magazine*.

APPENDIX V

THE EARLIEST OF THE ELEGIES: *IN MEMORIAM*

(*Vide* text *Supra* p. 227, reference 3, p. 234, reference 17)

The verses quoted in the text (See *Supra* pp. 234-35) were published by Sir Charles Tennyson in 'Tennyson Papers, II,' *The Cornhill Magazine*, 1936, pp. 426-449; the poem occurs on p. 447.

I am certain that these lines could not have been written after Hallam's death. The date appended to the lines is September 1833. Hallam died on 15 September. On 1 October, according to *Memoir*, i, p. 105 (see also Charles Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson*, London, 1950, pp. 144-45), Tennyson received the news of his friend's death from Henry Elton's letter. That this was the first time that Tennyson came to learn the news is clear from Hallam Tennyson's reference to Henry Elton's letter and Sir Charles Tennyson's description of Matilda Tennyson's carrying the letter to Alfred and of Alfred's breaking the news to Emily. The lines written in September could not therefore have been occasioned by Hallam's death. The news must have spread quickly to the Tennyson circle. Hallam Tennyson (*Memoir*, i, pp. 105-6) quotes John M. Kemble's undated letter to his sister Fanny. On 4 October, John Frere wrote to Frederick Tennyson a letter of condolence (*Letters of Frederick Tennyson* ed. Hugh H. Schonfield, London, 1930). It does not appear that these friends had received the news earlier than Tennyson or that Alfred had heard from them in September.

Sir Charles Tennyson with whom I corresponded on this matter wrote: 'I think you are undoubtedly right. The lines quoted by me in the Cornhill cannot have been written after Tennyson knew of A. H. H.'s death.'

The date of composition of the lines which I have quoted *supra* p. 235 from the *Memoir* (i, p. 107) is also uncertain; in a footnote, Hallam Tennyson quotes from Francis Garden's letter to Trench dated 26 Nov. 1833: 'When in London, I saw a letter from poor Alfred Tennyson. Both himself and his family seemed plunged in the deepest affliction.' But the date of this letter is no index to the the date of the verses.

According to Hallam Tennyson (*Memoir*, i, p. 109), the earliest MS. of

'The Two Voices' contains also 'the first written sections of *In Memoriam* in the following order' :

Fair ship that from the Italian shore.
(section ix in the final text)
With trembling fingers did we weave.
(section xxx in the final text)
When Lazarus left his charnel-cave.
(section xxxi in the final text)
This truth came borne with bier and pall.
(section lxxxv in the final text)
It draweth near the birth of Christ.
(section xxviii in the final text)

The earliest MS. of 'The Two Voices', dated 1833, is now in the Ashley Library, T. J. Wise's collection. To our definite knowledge, then, these five are the sections that were composed within three months from the time that Tennyson had heard of Hallam's death. None of these sections conveys a sense of intellectual doubt.

APPENDIX VI

REFERENCES TO SCIENCE IN EARLY VICTORIAN POETRY

(*Vide* text *Supra* p. 248, reference 28)

Outside the works of Tennyson and Browning, references to Science in English poetry from 1830 to 1850 occur in :

Anonymous, *Alpha* (London, 1841, pp. 106-109) ;

The poet believes that Nature's truth is revealed in science; such revelation is certain to intensify man's sense of the mystery of the absolute reality; there should be a poetry of science.

Philip James Bailey, *Festus* (second edition, London, 1845, p. 133) :

The world hath made such comet-like advance
Lately on science, we may almost hope,
Before we die of sheer decay, to learn
Something about our infancy.

On pp. 35 and 335 of this poem there are two images relating to lightning.

Mrs. Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (London, 1856) VI, 171-79:

How is this,
That men of science, osteologists
And surgeons, beat some poets in respect

For nature,—count not common or unclean,
Spend raptures upon perfect specimens
Of indurated veins, distorted joints,
Or beautiful new cases of curved spine,
While we, we are shocked at nature's falling off,
We dare to shrink back from her warts and blains.

Richard Trott Fisher, *The Night-Watch. An Argument* (London, 1845) and *The Day-Watch. An Argument* (London, 1849) :
Shows knowledge of astronomy in the first book and of geology in the second.

Arthur Hallam, 'Written in view of Ben Lomond', *The Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter, New York and London, 1943: Shows knowledge of geology.

Thomas Hawkins, *The Wars of Jehovah in Heaven, Earth, and Hell* (London, 1844) :
Hawkins was a geologist and there are many geological and geographical allusions in the book.

John Abraham Heraud, *The Descent into Hell* (London, 1830, p. 100) ;
Through the Earth's arteries it (Nature's soul) ever flowed,
The life of Earth is but its diastole.

R. H. Horne, *Orion. An Epic Poem* (London, 1843,p. 5) :
So from faint nebulae bright worlds are born.

Charles Mackay, 'The Poetry of Railways,' *Voices from the Crowd* (London, 1845) :

Blessings on science! In her dawning hour
Faith knit her brow, alarmed for ancient power ;
Then looked again upon her face sincere,
Held out her hand, and hailed her—Sister dear.

John Edmund Reade, 'To a Botanist', *Poetical Works* (London, 1857, vol. iv) :
See also the author's note to 'Man in Paradise', vol. iv, stating that in the light of modern scientific knowledge such passages of this book, in its first version, as described Creation according to the Mosaic account have now been excised.

William Bell Scott, *The Year of the World: a philosophical poem on 'Redemption from the Fall'* (Edinburgh and London, 1846) :
Science substitutes / For reasoning. (p. 89).
Science infinite, Torturing the inanimate to serve. (p. 100).

Robert Snow, 'The World Before Man', *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (London, 1843, printed for private circulation):
The theme is the geological changes of the Earth.

Charles Swain, 'The Mind', *The Mind and other poems* (London, 1841, III, xxxviii) :

In Science as in Literature—the same
Creative spirit elevates the tone! —
Philosopher and Bard must mount to fame
Each by Imagination's power alone;
The first conception Dalton's mind made known

Of the Atomic Theory—was *then*
A vision beautiful as Fancy's own!—

Waiting a Mind to grasp, and give its form to Men.

R. C. Trench, 'Science and Love', *Poems from Eastern Sources; the Steadfast Prince; and other poems* (London, 1842):

Bare science is dry sand;—thy spirit's wings
Bathe thou in Love's delicious water-springs.

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